

New Approach to the Study of the Qur'an

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A NEW APPROACH
to
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THE QUR'AN

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an enjoins and directs its readers to ponder and reflect on its revelations:

"We have sent down to you a Book which is blessed, so that people may apply their minds to its revelations; and the men of wisdom may reflect". (Qur'an 38:29)

"We have given examples of every kind, for men in this Qur'an, so that they may contemplate". (Qur'an 39:27)

The Qur'an is replete with injunctions and suggestions to grasp and contemplate. Thus it is very clear that the Qur'an requires its readers to meditate and ponder on the meaning of its *ayaat*.

These injunctions are not restricted to any particular period. They are for every reader of the Qur'an at all times.

In response to the above directions, this study has been undertaken.

An important fact regarding the text of the Qur'an is of great significance. There is only one text of the Qur'an in circulation today and it is exactly the same that the prophet of Islam received from Allah and handed down to posterity through his illustrious companions. In other words, the "textus recuptus" of the Qur'an in today's world is the exact "textus originales". More over the message of the Qur'an is accessible to one and all. Because of its absolute authenticity and accessibility the Qur'an invites every intelligent and sincere reader to benefit directly from its message. There is however, not the slightest suggestion that such a study will make one independent of commentaries and translations: in fact, no forward step is possible without holding firmly to the Qur'anic literature which is no doubt, our valuable heritage.

It was therefore, felt necessary to conduct an objective study of the Qur'an. A new and constructive approach to the in-depth study of the Qur'an, with a view to indicate the methodology which every student of the Qur'an could adopt for its better understanding, appeared to be necessary.

If we examine all the efforts made in different periods in the past to understand the Qur'an, we will find that some of the best talents in every period were devoted to the fulfillment of this purpose. Research was conducted at the highest level of that period. For example the excellent work on the literary beauties of the Qur'an, gave a new direction and new dimensions to the art of literary criticism. This also happened in the case of other branches of knowledge related to the Qur'an.

This continued until, in the field of Qur'anic learning and particularly exegesis, a period of imitation started. Far from providing guidance to other studies, Qur'anic studies today are to a large extent unable even to utilize the scientific methods of

contemporary times. As a consequence the truths which have relevance for the present times have not been fully conveyed.

Due to internal decadence, the Islamic vision has become blurred and the intellectual life of the Muslim *Ummah* has remained stagnant over the centuries.

It is therefore, necessary to encourage creative thinking instead of mechanical thinking in order to bring the Muslim *Ummah* closer to the Qur'an.

For this purpose it is essential to ignore those interpretations of the Qur'an which are the product of particular periods or of anti-Islamic minds.

When great Qur'anic scholars leave important gaps, the responsibility to explain and expound falls to the less competent, and a time comes when articulation becomes better than silence.

A clear idea regarding the style of the Qur'an is necessary for its better understanding. This aspect has been dealt with as an initial step.

In some passages the Qur'an has employed figurative language to convey its message. Almost all the figures of speech which are used in any language are found in the Qur'an. Some Qur'anic concepts which cannot be fully grasped by the human mind, have been explained through figurative expressions, making them easier to comprehend.

It was felt that in English there is a dearth of specialized studies on the various figures of speech used in the Qur'an. Also in most of the English translations of the Qur'an also, this aspect has not been given the consideration it deserves. I have therefore, ventured to introduce and deal with this subject in justifiable detail.

Terms play a very important role in the Qur'an. The Qur'an has its own terminology. Without a full grasp of the Qur'anic terminology, all efforts to understand the Qur'an will be futile. One full chapter is, therefore, devoted to this study and 37 terms of the Qur'an have been identified and presented with explanatory notes.

Un-Islamic terminology has removed us farther from those meanings of the Qur'an which were understood by its earliest followers - meanings which completely transformed their lives. Basically, the Qur'an should be understood to have the meaning which it had for the Prophet's Companions.

Several idioms have been used in the Qur'an. If the components of an idiom are translated literally, which has actually been done in some cases, the meaning will appear ridiculous. It was therefore considered necessary to identify them, without which, some passages of the Qur'an cannot be clearly understood. As a part of the present study, 17 idioms have been identified and explained.

Similarly the Qur'an has employed aphorisms to convey its divine message. These beautiful gems are intimately connected for the guidance of humanity which is the central theme of the Qur'an. These aphorisms are intended to approach human problems with stark realism.

With the earnest hope that these aphorisms will enrich the students with the knowledge of the Qur'an and will prompt further familiarity, a selection of 68 aphorisms is presented.

It was found that some *ayaat*, as well as words and names, of the Qur'an deserve particular attention, as different or alternative meanings or explanations have been ascribed to them. I have endeavored to make an in-depth study of such *ayaat*, words and names in the Qur'an, and offered my own preference for a particular interpretation. I have discussed 32 *ayaat*, 41 words and 12 names of the Qur'an and the most plausible interpretation is offered according to my best understanding. My interpretation of some of the *ayaat*, words or names, may be different from commonly accepted ones, but I have adopted it after careful thought. While offering, my own interpretation, I have strictly followed the principle that the interpretation must adhere as closely as possible to the text of the Qur'an, which it seeks to interpret. I am convinced that it is not objectionable either to use the power of thinking or to adopt a line of approach which is based on sound argument, so long as it is not contrary to the Qur'an and the basic principles of Islam. Though I alone am responsible for the conclusions drawn, I do not claim that they have any finality.

Care has been taken to accept the traditional views to the extent possible, however, outlandish views, which are not supported by the text of the Qur'an, and by reasons have been avoided.

It is the fervent desire of the author that earnest readers, who wish to acquaint themselves with the spirit of the Qur'an, may make this volume their companion in their Qur'anic study and that this work may prove as an authentic aid to them.

In today's atmosphere, it is important that all liberal minded Muslims escape from the superstitions inherited from medieval interpretations and attempt to learn the real spirit of the Qur'an. The intention of this study is to facilitate the earnest reader of the Qur'an in such an escape.

The venture behind this book is to lift the veils that shroud the mind of the younger generation of Muslims so that it is in a better position to discharge its obligation to the study of the Scripture.

This work will, '*Insha Allah*', provide an incentive to the study of the Qur'an to the students.

The mode of presentation of this work is in such a manner that it makes the systematic study of the Qur'an easier for the serious students and provides scope for deriving more reasonable influences from any Qur'anic subject.

All the *ayaat* from the Qur'an have been rendered into English anew for this work. In doing so, I have invariably consulted not less than 18 English translations which were available to me,

Abul-Fazl and Dr. Syed Abdul Latif.

It is my duty and pleasure, in conclusion, to express my indebtedness to

CHAPTER -1

STYLE OF THE QUR'AN

Style is “a characteristic mode of construction and expression in writing and speaking”¹ It is, “The manner of expression characteristic of a particular writer”². Style applies to “those features of literary composition which belong to form and expression rather than to the substance of the thought or matter expressed”³.

One special feature of the Qur'an is that its language is arranged in stylized patterns. The literary excellence of the Qur'an resides partly in its style, which is so perfect and lofty that the like of it none could produce. The merits of the Qur'an as a literary production should be measured in the first instance by the effects it produced in the contemporaries and the fellow countrymen of the Prophet.

A literary approach to the study of the Qur'an begins with the awareness of its reliance on stylistic language.

From the purity of its style and elegance of its diction, the Qur'an has come to be considered as the standard of Arabic even by those who have no belief in it.

When we study the style of the Qur'an, one important fact requires to be kept in mind. The Qur'an was revealed in the spoken colloquial Arabic. “In every country, at all times, the language that is spoken is different from that which is written. The spoken language cannot match the literary written language. The force of the colloquial cannot be retained in the formal niceties of the written language. What is spoken impinges on the moment, its impact and effect cannot be reproduced in the written language. The celestial melody and intrinsic merit of the Qur'an struck the Arabs dumb when they first heard it as well as when it was written down word by word. This spoken message turned into a masterpiece of literature and the oral message revealed at intervals became a code of life for all times. This in itself is a miracle not only for believers in the Book, but also for others since it encompasses fundamental realities. The claim of the Qur'an to its scriptural Divine origin rests on this plea”¹.

Whenever the Prophet was asked for a miracle as a proof of the authenticity of his Prophetic mission, he pointed to the revelation of the Qur'an and its incomparable excellence as proof of its divine origin.

1. Repetition (*Takrar*)

One stylistic device employed by the Qur'an is repetition (*takrar*). One comes across words, phrases and even '*ayaat*' again and again. This device has given beauty to the style of the Qur'an and the message is better understood because of the repetitions. In *Surah Al Rahman* (55)

the '*ayah*' "Which then, of the powers of your Lord will you call a lie?", has been repeated 31 times¹.

The Style of the Qur'an is at once beautiful and fluent. It is also very concise. It is adorned and enlivened with florid and sententious expressions. It is sublime and magnificent especially where the majesty and attributes of Allah are described.

2. The Qur'an and Poetry

Exaggeration used to be one of the elements of Arabic poetry but the Qur'an disapproves of what the poets said but did not practice themselves. The Prophet of Islam always practiced what he preached. The poets usually dealt with worldly matters, false vanity and the arrogance of sheer physical bravery as the themes of their poetry. They also temporarily incited low and mean passions.

The Qur'an takes the opposite view of life and says;

"What is the life of this world but play and amusement?" (Qur'an 6:32).

Arabic poetry usually dealt with pure fantasy and with matters which had hardly any basis in wisdom. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is a book of pure wisdom (*hikmat*).

Poetry usually dealt with ephemeral matters, whereas the Qur'an emphasizes matters of everlasting values and eternal life. The poets' main purpose was to win temporary applause which was certainly not the purpose of the Qur'an. Arabic poetry combined truth and falsehood in such a way that the hearer was unable to distinguish between the two, whereas the Qur'an is absolute truth. Poetry was usually an array of words which impressed the listeners with its artistic beauty. The impact of such poetry, however, was only short lived.

Although the language of the Qur'an is related to what had already become the poetical koine of the Arabs, it cannot be equated with it. The Qur'an is subject to no rule, measure, or standard. It is a law unto itself. "It has been the privilege of the Koran rather to impose its own laws upon grammar than to accept them from other sources"¹. Its language became the basis of format or classical Arabic, both literary and spoken. Unquestionably it is regarded as the standard. Its style is nevertheless inimitable. The Qur'an could be called poetry or poetic prose, with a striking austerity all its own. The earlier Makkan passages are frequently reminiscent of the pre-Islamic style called '*saj'*' which stands between poetry and prose with assauances, rhymes and near-rhymes and line lengths and meters which frequently shift"².

The composition of the Qur'an is not subject to any known style. The style of some of its parts is quite different from that of some others. What it emphasizes the most is the idea, which is the quintessence of truth (*haqq*) and wisdom (*hikmat*). The form adopted by the Qur'an for a particular idea is the most suitable for its presentation. In suitable and majestic diction, terms and figures of speech have no doubt been used which clarify the word of Allah and the message of the Qur'an, but they have only a secondary importance in comparison with the basic ideas

and the fundamental purpose of the message. All these literary features are not meant as mere verbal decoration.

The stylistic excellence of the Qur'an and its highly patterned arrangement was accepted as early as the ninth century, when the tools of literary analysis were applied to the passages of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an, proved itself beyond imitation in its form and style as well as in substance. In fact its form so perfectly matched the content that it looked as if each is made for the other. Each enhanced the effect of the other and together both contributed to convey the divine message most effectively. The music is wonderfully interwoven into the fabric of the theme.

Says Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe:

"Its (the Qur'an's) style, in accordance with its contents and aim, is stern, grand, terrible --- ever and anon truly sublime"¹.

Paying tribute to the Qur'an and its style Goethe further says, "It soon attracts, astounds, and in the end enforces our reverence"².

3. Rhyme and Rhythm

Though the Qur'an employed the same words which were in use in the contemporary Arabic language, these were fashioned with such unsurpassed skill that the simple ordinary words gave the Qur'an its distinctive style, which has a beauty and charm of its own. The beauty lies in its brief pregnant *ayaat* which are often rhymed. They possess an expressive force and an explosive energy.

The Qur'an has a remarkable rhythm of peculiar beauty. It has a grandiose cadence that charms the ear. "When it is read aloud or recited, it has an almost hypnotic effect..... It is this quality it possesses of silencing criticism by the sweet music of its language that has given birth to the dogma of its inimitability; indeed it may be affirmed that within the literature of the Arabs, wide and fecund as it is both in poetry and in elevated prose, there is nothing to compare with it"³.

"Whenever I hear the Qur'an chanted, it is as though I am listening to music. Underneath the flowing melody there is sounding all the time the insistent beat of the drum, it is like the beating of the heart"⁴.

The Arabs had a natural inclination for poetry and an absorbing interest in it since ancient times. The best poetry of a nation is usually produced in the period of its decline. Usually the sensibility and emotions of a nation are transferred to the plane of imagination and poetry at a time when its mind is deprived of the capacity for action. It is therefore not, surprising that Arab poetry had reached a high level while the decadence of the Arabs had reached its zenith before the advent of Islam. The Qur'an was revealed at a time when the Arab mind was overly preoccupied with poetry.

The accompanying chart makes it clear that the revelation of the Qur'an coincided with a period of the cumulative dominance of the following fourteen Arab poets:

Poets of *Mu'allaqat*

1. Umru' al-Qays (500-540)
2. Tarafah bin al-Abd (d.550 or 552)
3. 'Amr bin Kulthum (d. 570)
4. Al-Harith bin Hillizah (d. 540 or 560)
5. 'Antara bin Shadda'd (d. 615)
6. A'sha bin Qays (d. 629)
7. Zuhayr bin Abi Sulm'a (d. 615 or 631)
8. Nabigha al-Dhubyani (d. 640)

Poets of *al-Jamharat*

1. Ubaid bin al-Abras (d.555)
2. Umayya bin Abi 'l-Salt (d. 624)

Poets of *al-Muntaqayat*

1. Al Muraqqish al-Akber (d. 552)
2. 'Alqamah al-Fahal (d. 598 or 625)

Sa'alik Poets

1. Shanfar'a (d. 510)
2. Ta'bbata Sharrah (d. 530)

Basically, the Qur'an is the quintessential book of wisdom, and thus it is the antithesis of poetry. Stimulating and awakening is not a function of poetry and is usually incompatible with it. The opponents of Islam in the early period used to allege that the Prophet of Allah is a poet and that the Qur'an is a work of poetry. The Qur'an has emphatically denied this allegation and speaks critically of the poets who say what they practice not. It is assured that the Qur'an is not poetry, it is a revelation from Allah.

"This is verily the word of an honored apostle; it is not the word of a poet." (Qur'an 69: 40-41).

“We have not instructed the Prophet in poetry. Nor is it suitable for him. This is no less than a message and a Qur’an making things clear.” (Qur’an 36: 69)

“And the poets - it is those straying in evil who follow them. See you not that they wander distracted in every valley and they say what they practice not.” (Qur’an 26: 224-226).

In order to determine the style of the Qur’an, it is necessary to consider the basic elements of poetry and to take into account elements which are repudiated by the Qur’an.

The Qur’an did not accept the style of Arab poetry, with all its rigid metrical connection of rhymed metre and identical word endings. Allah chose for the Qur’an a unique style which has no parallel either before or after the Qur’an in any literature of the world.

But at the same time the Qur’an did not completely ignore the Arab inclination towards poetry. There are some features of Arab poetry which the Qur’an does not oppose, for example the rhetorical use of words and the use of figures of speech. These elements are found in a high degree of perfection in the Qur’an.

To sum up, the Qur’an is not just poetry and the style of the Qur’an is not in accordance with the poetic principles of Arab poets. The Qur’an is, undoubtedly, a divine message, and quite understandably this message had to be conveyed in human language. The Qur’an used the figures of speech which were considered the essentials of Arab poetry, as the medium for communication of its message of wisdom, and employed in its style all the features which were considered the beauties of poetic style by the Arabs. In this way, the Qur’an became a masterpiece of literary style, which though not poetry encompasses all the beauties of poetry. It has a profound emotional appeal and uses many poetic devices, which can be regarded as the attributes of any great literature. At many places the *ayaat* or parts of them have poetic metres and rhymes. Scholars throughout the centuries have recognized the poetic character of the Qur’an. One of the miraculous features of the Qur’an is that; though not poetry it contains poetic essence. These poetic beauties were not the real objective of the Qur’an, but it made them a means for the attainment of its purpose. Its real purpose is to uplift human society and turn it to the worship of its Creator. The Prophet, under the guidance of the Qur’an, not only uplifted the society of his time from a state of decadence, by creating an intellectual awakening, a moral regeneration and a dynamic social momentum, but liberated the human mind in general, and led it on the path of an unimpeded scientific development. When the Arabs accepted the Qur’anic teachings, society gained a new impetus for growth. A community of people of noble action and character came into being, and that sounded the death-knell of Arab poetry. But Arab poetry continues to be important in so far as it is helpful in understanding the stylistic beauties of the Qur’an.

The Qur’an is revealed in rhyming prose. It is artistically constructed. It is strongly rhetorical in comparison to Arabic prose.

The Qur’an is revealed in an exalted style. It brought about a style which is neither poetry nor prose. This style is far above the linguistic standards of the Arabic language. It possesses the ability to arouse its hearers to ecstasies of faith.

“No Arabic prose dating from before Islam has come down to us. According to the classic picture of Arabic literature, in the beginning there was only poetry. The sudden appearance of the new literary form (the Koran) and this, moreover of a kind which they regard as perfect, with no previous preparation, antecedents or precursors, could not be explained except by a miracle.”¹

“The Qur’an is itself highly poetical, particularly in its vivid and powerful diction and in the masterful artistry and expressiveness of its portrayals; but it is not poetry of the kind the pagans condemned in it.”²

The Qur’an is not in the medium of poetry and at the same time it cannot be called simple prose. It is in the form of versified prose which is the most effective and successful in the attainment of its purpose. Its verbal cadence and rhythmic *ayah* endings have a profound impact on the listeners.

4. Narratives

One of the stylistic features of the Qur’an is that it contains narratives (*qassas*, sig. *qissa*). This is referred to in the Qur’an itself:

“We do relate to you the most beautiful of narrative, in that We reveal to you this (portion of the) Qur’an.” (Qur’an 12: 3)

The narratives of the Qur’an illustrate and underline important aspects of the Qur’anic message.

The Qur’an mostly restricts itself to narrate the stories of the earlier prophets (messengers of Allah). The exceptions are the narratives about the Companions of the Cave (*Surah Al-Kahaf*) etc. These narratives are not mere stories. They teach the highest truth, provide advice, direction and warning as to how we should govern our lives. These narratives awaken our conscience and recall to us the working of Divine Law in human affairs.

If properly understood the narratives of the Qur’an give valuable lessons to guide our conduct. These narratives are reminders and fulfill the function of providing guidance to the believers:

“There is, in their (Apostle’s) stories instructions for men endued with understanding ----- and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe.” (Qur’an 12: 111)

In short the purpose of the Qur’anic narratives is to emphasize the general message of Islam and to strengthen the conviction in the teachings of the Prophet.

The narratives of the Qur’an are not imaginary fables. These narratives are found in the sacred scriptures of the people of the Book. The approach of the Qur’an is that the Biblical stories which were current among the Arabs and with which they were familiar are either recounted or passing reference is made to them. The Qur’an confirms the narratives of the Bible

in main outline. Particular aspects of the story are stressed to strengthen the argument or to explain a point, the details are omitted, corrections are made here and there. The presentation of the story is elevated and its general effect is also amplified. The Qur'anic narratives are models of succinctness, without the required details, contributing to the total effect.

Qur'anic narratives are woven around human experience rather than having abstract thought as its subject. Instead of appealing primarily to a set of ideas.

The fact that the message of the Qur'an is not something new but is the continuation of earlier messages brought by earlier prophets, is highlighted through the Qur'anic narratives.

In one sentence, the innumerable Prophets, who were sent by Allah in different parts of the world and at different times, are fully covered:

"Some Prophets have we mentioned to you and some we have not mentioned" (Qur'an 4:134).

According to the Qur'an, the Messengers of Allah have played a role throughout history in communicating the message of Allah and demonstrating the way of life, man is expected to follow. Since Allah gave one and the same message to all his Messengers, the teachings of all the Messengers of Allah are identical, constant and complimentary.

The fact that the message of the Qur'an is not something new but is the continuation of earlier messages brought by earlier Prophets, is highlighted through the Qur'anic narratives.

5. Digression: (*iltefat*)

Digression is the kind of style in which there is sudden transition and the addressee is changed during the discourse itself. It is characteristic of '*iltefat*' that something altogether different (but relevant to the subject) is suddenly introduced into the middle of the discourse. Digression of address has infinite possibilities of penetrating into the hearts of the addressee. As a means of communication it has a tremendous impact. The Qur'an performs the function of a speaker who addresses different people all over the world. It focuses its attention on one person or group at one time, and diverts it to another during the same address. Its range includes those who are present as well as those who are absent. The Qur'an frequently adopts the method of warning or emphasizing a particular point in the middle of the narration. Its object is not to relate a story but to make its description clear or to warn those who oppose the spread of truth.

Specimens of '*iltefat*' from the Qur'an are:

1. In the first four *ayaat* of the *Surah Al-Fateha* Allah's divine qualities are described in third person. In the 5th *ayah*, He is addressed in the second person. The last two *ayaat* are supplication in which Allah is the addressee.
2. The translation of the *ayah* 7: 158 is as follows;

Say: "O men, I am verily the apostle to all of you from Allah whose kingdom extends over the heavens and the earth. There is no Allah but He, the giver of life and death. So believe in

Allah and the messenger, the gentle Prophet, sent by Him, who believes in Allah and His messages. Obey him; you may haply be guided aright."

As per the Divine injunction, the Prophet is addressing mankind and saying "I am verily the apostle to all of you from Allah."

In the second part of the *ayah*, however, there is a sudden transition in style. The Prophet is asked to say, "so believe in Allah and the 'messenger'." Here he is not asked to say 'believe in Allah and me' as the messenger etc.

3. The translation of the *ayah* 10:87 is as follows:

And thus did We inspire Musa and his brother: "set aside for your people some houses in the city, and (tell them), 'Turn your houses into places of worship, and be constant in prayer.' And give thou (O Musa) the glad tiding of Allah's succor to all believers.."

In the first part, Prophet Musa and his brother are addressed. Then there is a diversion of address, and Prophet Musa is addressed in the singular form.

4. In the first two *ayaat* of *Surah 'Abasa'* (80) the Prophet is mentioned in the third person:

"He frowned and turned away, because the blind man approached him". (Qur'an 80: 1&2)

Then the addressee is changed, From *ayah* 2 to 10 The Prophet is the addressee:

"Yet for all thou did know (O' Muhammad) he might perhaps have grown in purity." etc. (Qur'an 80:3 to 10)

From the *ayah* 11 to the end of the *Surah*, the addressee is again changed. The addressee is the entire humanity.

5. In *ayah* 19: 88 the blasphemy of the Christians is mentioned in third person:

They say:

"Allah has begotten a son." (Qur'an 19: 88)

Then there is a sudden diversion of address. The Christians are directly addressed:

"You have uttered a grievous thing which would cleve the skies asunder, rend the earth, and spilt the mountains". (Qur'an 19: 89, 90)

Again there is a remark about the Christians in third person:

"For they have attributed a son to Ar-Rahman". (Qur'an 19: 91)

6. The rendering of *ayah* 17: 12 is as follows:

"And We have established the night and the day as a twin symbol, and there upon We have effaced a symbol of night and set up (in its place) the light giving symbol of day, so that

you might seek to obtain your Sustainer's bounty and be aware of the passing years, and of the reckoning (that is bound to come). For clearly have We spelt out every thing."

In the above *ayah* the addressees are the contemporary Arabs who were the first hearers of the Qur'an.

In *ayah* 17: 14 however, the addressee is changed. A person whose record of deeds is tied to his neck becomes the addressee:

(And he will be told) "Read this thy record. Sufficient is thine own self today to make out thine account."

7. In *Surah At-Tur* (52) after the adjuration the addressee is man, and he is told how the sufferings decreed by Allah for the sinners will come to pass. He is also told how the '*muttaqeen*' will be rewarded. Then the addressee is changed.

In *ayah* 52: 19 the addressees are the inmates of paradise, and they are told:

"Eat and drink with good cheer as an outcome of what you were wont to do." (Qur'an 52: 19)

8. When the messengers were arguing with the '*As-habul Qarya*', a man came running from the other side of the city and asked the people to follow the messengers, i.e. to follow those who do not [ask](#) for any recompense and are rightly guided. Then he interrogates:

"Why should I not worship Him who brought me into being, to whom you will be brought back in the end?" (Qur'an 36: 22)

The first part of this *ayah* is in singular form. In the second part, however, there is 'diversion of address.' Instead of saying "to whom I will be brought back in the end?", it is said "to whom you will be brought back in the end."

9. In *Surah Yunus* from *ayah* 75 the story of Prophet Moosa is narrated. In *ayah* 10: 90 it is described how Allah brought the children of Israel across the sea, and how Firaun and his hosts pursued them with vehement insolence and tyranny until they were overwhelmed by the waters of the sea. When Firaun was about to drown, he exclaimed. "I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who surrender themselves unto Him." (Qur'an 10: 90)

Here the addressee is changed. In the *ayaat* 10: 91 and 92 the addressee is Firaun. In *ayah* 10: 93 the description continues. Again in *ayaat* 10: 94 and 95 the addressee is man.

6. Presentation in various forms (*tasreef*)

One of the stylistic devices of the Qur'an is the formulation of an idea in different ways and the *ayah* of different modes of expression. The Qur'an repeats over and over again in manifold forms the more important subjects. The expression changes, but the central theme and its purpose do not. This stylistic device avoids the unpleasant necessity of verbal repetition. It also ensures a fuller comprehension of the various aspects of an idea. Basically, the corner stone of the Qur'anic teachings are three concepts: belief in the oneness of Allah, in the Hereafter, and in the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (S). These three concepts are reiterated in such a manner that each time they have a freshness of presentation.

The fact that the Qur'an has employed different modes of expression and has given diverse forms to its *ayaat* is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an itself.

Says the Qur'an:

1. "And see how We give many facets to Our messages". (Qur'an 6: 46, 6: 65 etc.)
2. "And thus do We give many facets to Our Messages.-----" (Qur'an 6 : 105)
3. "And, indeed, many facets have We given (to Our messages) in this Qur'an, so that they (who deny the truth) might take it to heart: but all this only increases their aversion". (Qur'an 17: 41)
4. "For, indeed, many facets have We given in this Qur'an to every kind of lesion (design) for (the benefit of mankind)". (Qur'an 17: 41, 17:89, and 18:54)

Turning aside from one form of expression to another is not limited to the above three or several other concepts of the Qur'an. The Qur'an explains even the narratives, parables etc. in various forms.

The Qur'an has even given many facets to the warnings to the erring people before destroying them:

"Thus have We destroyed many a (sinful) community living round about you; and yet, (before destroying them) We had given many facets to (Our warning) messages, so that they might turn back (from their evil ways)". (Qur'an 46: 27)

7. Ellipsis (*hazaf*)

The omission of one or more words in a sentence, which would be needed to express the sense completely, is called ellipsis.

We find elliptic *ayaat* in the Qur'an as a part of its style, in which one or more unnecessary words, phrases or passages are omitted. The presence of these superfluous elements is of course a distraction of the reader's or hearer's attention. Such of the words or passages are omitted which can be known by the application of reason. Elliptic passages, in fact, make one to contemplate and apply his mind so as to determine the omitted words or passages, and bring out the desired meaning or the central theme by means of interpolations.

The marvelous conciseness of the Qur'an adds greatly to the force and energy of its expressions. The frequent use of ellipsis contributes to its beauty.

Apart from the beauty of the literary style, one of the advantages of ellipsis is that the reader is left to contemplate himself and ponder over the text of the Qur'an, and try to think of suitable interpolations. As one advances with the understanding of the Qur'an, the required interpolations appear to be too obvious.

Ellipsis is quite different from obscurity or vagueness. Obscurity is the quality or condition of not being clearly understood or comprehended. It is considered as one of the beauties of poetry. Obscurity has been mentioned as one of the characteristics of early Greek poetry. Also in the literature of other languages, obscurity is considered as one of the beauties of style. As a rule the Qur'an has not used obscurity, but at certain places, the Qur'an has deliberately used phrases which appear to be vague (*mubham*) to an ordinary human being. For example, the Qur'an says about an experience of the Prophet:

"When the '*sidra*' was veiled with whatever veiled it." (Qur'an 55: 16)

This vagueness is indicative of the inconceivable majesty and splendour attaching to the symbol of Prophetic experience which no description can fully picture and no definition can completely embrace.

Following are some of the elliptic passages of the Qur'an:

1. Literal rendering of the *ayah* 2: 171 will be: "The parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of him who cries unto what hears nothing but cry and a call." "What hears nothing but a cry and a call" are the 'cattle' to whom the unbelievers are compared. The one who cries is the 'shepherd' to whom to the Prophet is compared. Unless the words 'cattle' and 'shepherd' are interpolated the meaning of the *ayah* will not be clear.

2. The following is the rendering of the *ayah* 17:59 in which the interpolations are given in brackets:

"And nothing has prevented us from sending (this message, like the earlier ones,) with miraculous signs (in its wake), save (Our knowledge) that the people of olden times (only too often) gave the lie to them: thus, We provided for (the tribe of) Thamud the she-camel as a light-giving portent, and they sinned against it. And never did We send those signs for any other purpose than to convey a warning".

"This highly elliptic sentence has a fundamental bearing on the purport of the Qur'an as a whole".¹

3. 25: 20. This is an elliptic passage. Unless the words 'human beings' are interpolated, the meaning cannot be clearly understood:

"We caused you (human beings) to be a means of testing one another?" (Qur'an 25: 20)

4. In some *ayaat* certain words are omitted for the sake of compactness. For the sake of full understanding it is necessary to determine the omitted words. For example:

1. In *ayah* 7: 12 if the elliptic (omitted) words are incorporated and it is expanded it would read as follows:

“(And Allah) said: ‘What prevented you from prostrating yourself when I commanded you?’ Answered (*Iblis*); ‘I am superior to him: You have created me out of fire, whereas him You have created out of clay.’ ” (7:12)

2. In 11: 48 if the elliptic (omitted) words are incorporated, it would read as follow:

“(Thereupon) the word was spoken: ‘O Nuh! Disembark in peace from Us, and with (Our) blessings upon you as well as upon the people (who are with you, and the righteous ones that will spring from you and) from those who are with you. But (as for the unrighteous) folk (that will spring from you) We shall allow them to enjoy life (for a little while), and then there will befall grievous suffering from Us.’ ” (Qur’an 11:48)

3. In *ayah* 13:13 if the elliptic (omitted) words are incorporated, it would read as follows:

“And the thunder extols His limitless glory and praises Him, and (so do) the angels, in awe of Him; and He (it is who) lets loose the thunderbolts and strikes with them whom He wills.....” (Qur’an 13:13)

4. In *ayah* 20; 92 and in early part of 20: 93, if the elliptic (omitted) words are incorporated, they would read as follows:

“ (And now that he had come back, Moses) said: ‘O Harun! What has prevented you, when you did see that they had gone astray, from (abandoning them and) following me?.....’ ” (Qur’an 20:92 and 93)

5. In *ayah* 12:82 the words ‘and you will find that’, although not specifically mentioned, are understood by the very context. After substituting the omitted words, the translation will be as follows:

“Enquire from the people of that city, or ask the men of the caravan with whom we have come (and you will find that) We are indeed telling the truth!” (Qur’an 12: 82)

6. Literal rendering of *ayaat* 17:75 will be:

“In which case We would indeed have made you taste double in life and double after-death, and you would have found none to succor you against Us.”

In this *ayah* the word ‘chastisement’ is omitted twice. The literary beauty of this ellipsis lies in the fact that any careful reader will find out that the omitted word is nothing but chastisement. After substituting the omitted words, the rendering of the *ayah* will be as follows:

“In which case We would indeed have made you taste double (chastisement) in life and double (chastisement) after death, and you would have found none to succor you against Us!” (Qur’an 17: 75)

7. Literal rendering of *ayah* 18: 74 will be: “And so the two went on, till, they met a young man, (the sage) slew him - (whereupon Prophet Moosa) exclaimed: ‘Have you slain an innocent being without life? Indeed, you have done a terrible thing!’ ”

In this *ayah*, the words ‘his having taken another man’s’ are omitted. By substituting these omitted words the rendering will be as follows:

“-----Have you slain an innocent being without (his having taken another man’s) life? -----” (Qur’an 18: 74)

8. The *ayah* 24: 61 is highly elliptic, hence there is difference of opinion among the exegetes as to its purport.

9. One interesting example of ellipsis is found in *Surah Yusuf* wherein the glory of prophet Yusuf is narrated. Between *ayaat* 81, 82 and *ayah* 83 some events are omitted:

When Yusuf’s brothers started for the second time on their journey from Egypt, carrying food grains with them, the stolen cup is found in the younger brother’s belongings, and he is arrested. At this the other brothers try to have some other brother arrested (or detained) instead of him. But this request is not granted. Then, when they sit apart, the eldest brother says that he would not go back because his father had extracted from him a promise that he would bring back Joseph’s own brother to him. He asked them to return and report to the father that his son had committed a theft. He added that the fact could be verified from the people of the township where they stayed and from their fellow travellers.

“Return to your father and say: ‘O our father! verily your son has committed theft. We bear witness only to what we know, and we could not well guard against the unseen’.” (Qur’an 12:81)

“ ‘Ask at the town where we have been and the caravan in which we returned, (and you will find we are indeed telling the truth.’ ” (Qur’an 12:82)

This is the speech of Yusuf’s elder brother in Egypt. After this, Yaqub speaks as follows:

“Yaqub said: ‘Nay, but you have yourselves contrived a story (good enough) for you; but patience is most becoming; it may be that Allah will bring them (back) to me altogether, verily, He is the Knowing, the Wise.’ ” (Qur’an 12:83)

All the intervening events ----- the departure of Yusuf’s brother from Egypt, their arrival at their homeland, and their reporting of the elder brother’s words to their father, Yaqub, have been omitted.

If we are not aware of this stylistic feature of the Qur’an it is quite likely that the ellipsis will perplex us and will leave in our mind a feeling of vagueness.

Without incorporating the interpolations, the meanings of the *ayah* are not quite clear.

8. Brevity (*ijaz*)

According to al-Jahiz (born 150/767) who was the undisputed leader of his day in oratory and writing, "The best composition is that where the fewer words obviate the need of more; where the meanings are carried by the words in full view. And if both are appropriate to each other, they fall upon the heart like rain upon the good soil." (*Al-Bayan wal Tabyin*)

Brevity is a stylistic device in which only the kernel of an idea is presented, and all subsidiary details are omitted. Brevity has wealth of meaning. According to a critic, "brevity is the soul of wisdom", and according to another, "the best composition is that which is brief and full of meaning."

The Qur'an has used brevity as one of its stylistic features. The language of the Qur'an does not contain any redundancy. The Qur'an abounds in aphorisms which are the best examples of this style.

Here are some examples of brevity in the Qur'an.

1. Referring to the drink which the believers will get in Paradise the Qur'an says:

"By which they will not have any after-ache nor will they suffer intoxication". (Qur'an 56:19)

Thus in a short sentence all the evils of the intoxicating drinks of this world have been fully described.

2. Referring to the fruits which will be given to the inmates of Paradise, only one phrase, "un-ending un-forbidden" (Qur'an 56:33) is mentioned. This small phrase contains a wealth of meaning.

The *Surahs* of Makkan period are small and the *ayaat* therein are also brief. Yet they contain all the basic teachings of Islam. The Qur'an is full of '*Jame, kalamat*' in which the Qur'anic concepts are explained in brevity.

3. While showing the bounties of Allah which are innumerable, the Qur'an uses only two words "fruits and herbage (*wa fakihatun wa abba*)" (Qur'an 80:31).

4. In one swearing, the Qur'an has used a phrase "that you see and what you see not (*bima tubserun, wa ma la tubserun*)". (Qur'an 69: 39). This phrase comprises all the observable as well as all intangible verities accessible to man's instinct. Thus nothing in the universe is left out.

5. To show that Allah inspired the Prophet Muhammad (S) through the Qur'an, in the same way as He inspired all the Prophets before him, the Qur'an says, "some Prophets have We mentioned to you and some We have not mentioned. -----" (Qur'an 4:134) Thus in one sentence, the innumerable Prophets, who were sent by Allah in different parts of the world and at different times, are fully covered.

6. To show the innumerable possibilities of Allah's creation, it is said in the Qur'an:

"And (it is He who creates) horses and mules and asses for you to ride, as well as for adornment (as a symbol of prestige) and He will yet create (other) things of which (today) you have no knowledge." (Qur'an 16:8)

This alludes to the future modes of transport and at the same time, this one sentence reminds that the cattle are meant for human use and not for worship.

9. Detail after Epitome

The Qur'an very often first uses summarization and follows it with details. The detailed account embodies a wealth of knowledge and explains minor points as well. This is an excellent method of instruction.

The fact that the Qur'an has used 'detail after epitome' as a stylistic feature is mentioned in the Qur'an itself:

"-----('This is) a Book, with messages basic or fundamental, (which are) further explained in detail ---" (Qur'an 11:1)

When the addressee are the Arabs, the Qur'an usually resorts to brevity, but when the people of Israel are the addressees, it uses the style of 'detail after epitome'.

This stylistic feature has many advantages. In the first instance a concept is mentioned in brief. This creates a reaction of acceptance, doubt or rejection. Then the same idea is explained in detail. These details expand the concept so that more people could fully comprehend it.

Following are some of the examples of this stylistic features of the Qur'an.

In *ayah* 2: 257 a general principle is explained that Allah is near to the believers.

In the subsequent three *ayaat* the details are given in the form of narration, as to how Allah brings the believers from darkness into light and how the unbelievers are pushed into darkness. In the first instance, there is a narration of a king who is intoxicated with power. Prophet Ibrahim is keen to bring him into light, but he enters into arguments regarding the Sustainer. Prophet Ibrahim argues with him successfully, but he continues in his un-belief.

This is followed by a narration of a person who sincerely seeks enlightenment. He does not doubt, but when there are some doubts, Allah clears them and gives him confidence.

Lastly there is the mention of Prophet Ibrahim himself, who was neither like the first one nor like the second. He aspired for the expansion of his understanding, which Allah granted.

Thus one point is raised in the first instance and then it is elaborated.

10. Structural reversal

The Qur'an employs a unique method of structural reversal as one of its stylistic features. It makes a statement and during discussion its continuation is left off and it indulges into a related idea, and then there is a reversal to the original idea or statement.

Following are examples of this stylistic feature of the Qur'an:

In *Surah* 24 serious note is taken of people who put forward slanders about women without adequate evidence. Then continuation is left off. In *ayaat* 6 to 11 related matter is discussed. Then there is structural reversal and contents of *ayaat* 11 to 13 are in continuation of

the contents of *ayaat* 4 and 5. By not taking a note of this structural reversal correct understanding of *ayah* 24:11 is not possible (see Page.274 of this book).

Surah Al-Hashar (59) starts with the description of the glory of Allah:

“All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth sings the praise of Allah” (Qur’an 59:1).

Then the topic changes. *Ayah* 2 to 17 refer to the conflict between the Muslim *Ummah* and the Jews of Medina, and their subsequent banishment.

In *ayaat* 18 to 20 the believers are addressed and certain instructions are given to them. In *ayah* 21 it is said:

“If We had sent down this Qur’an on a mountain, you would have seen it turned desolate and cleft asunder for fear of Allah. Such similitude’s are propounded for man to reflect.”

After this the Qur’an reverts back to the original idea, and the last three *ayaat* (22 to 24) are again in praise of Allah.

Surah Al-Mumtahanah (60) deals with the problem of the believers in their relations with the unbelievers.

In the first two *ayaat* injunctions are given as to how believers should behave with non believers.

Then there is a diversion. Some related matters are discussed in *ayaat* 3 to 7. Then there is reversal to the original idea and the last six *ayaat* are devoted to the original problem and further injunctions are given with respect to the mutual relations of the Muslims with non-believers.

11. Parenthesis

Parenthesis is “an explanatory or qualifying word, clause or sentence inserted into a passage, with which it has not necessarily any grammatical connexion.”¹

The use of parenthesis is also one of the stylistic features of the Qur’an. The Qur’an sometimes employs Parenthesis in order to amplify an argument. These digressions are themselves of the greatest use and have an intrinsic value of their own.

Usually parenthetical clauses are marked off from the passage by brackets, dashes or commas. Such markings are not available to us in the text of the Qur’an. It is therefore, necessary to determine a parenthetical clause through an analytical study of the *ayah* structure, with our own efforts.

The following are some of the parenthetical clauses or *ayaat* identified as such in the Qur’an.

1. The rendering of *ayah* 2:24 is as follows:

“And if you cannot do it ---- and most certainly you cannot do it -- then be conscious of the fire whose fuel is human beings and stones (idols) -----” (Qur’an 2: 24)

The clause “and most certainly you cannot do it”, is parenthetic.

2. In *ayah* 2: 102, the following sentence is parenthetic:

“For it was not (Prophet) Suleyman who denied the truth, but those evil ones denied it by teaching people sorcery.”

3. In *Surah Al Imran* (3) the story of Mariam starts with *ayah* 35. While narrating the story one passage is inserted:

“This account of something which was beyond the reach of your perception We (now) reveal unto you: for you were not with them when they drew lots as to which of them should be Mary’s guardian, and you were not with them when they contended (about it) with one another.” (Qur’an 3:44)

This passage (3:44) is parenthetic.

4. The translation of *ayah* 100 of *Surah* 6 is as follows:

“And yet, some (people) have come to attribute to all manner of invisible beings a place side by side with Allah - (although it is) He (who) has created them all; - and in their ignorance they have invented for Him sons and daughters!”

In this *ayah* the word “*Khalaqahum*” (He has created them) is parenthetic.

5. In *ayah* 7: 42, the following sentence is parenthetic

“We do not burden any human being with more than he is able to bear”

This sentence is also a beautiful aphorism. The rendering of the *ayah* is as follows:

“But those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds ---We do not burden any human being with more than he is able to bear ---they are destined for Paradise, therein to abide.” (Qur’an 7: 42)

6. In *ayah* 11: 100 the following phrase is parenthetic:

“Some of them still remaining, and some (extinct like) a field mown-down.”

7. In *ayah* 17: 101 the following phrase is parenthetic:

“Ask, then, the children of Israel.”

8. The following part of *ayah* 33: 38 is parenthetic:

“And (remember that) Allah’s command is an absolute decree”.

9. The following part of *ayah* 37: 158 is parenthetic:

“(Although these invisible forces know well that), verily, they (who thus blaspheme against Allah) shall indeed be arraigned (before Him on Judgment Day)”.

10. In *ayah* 56: 76, the following clause is parenthetic:

“ ----- if you but knew it -----.” (Qur’an 56: 76)

12. Swearings

To swear in English means “to affirm, assert or declare something by an oath; to make an oath to the truth of a statement.”¹ Similarly oath is “a solemn appeal to God (or to something sacred) in witness that a statement is true or a promise binding.”²

In Arabic language, ‘*yameen*’ (plural *aimaan*) which literally means right hand or right side, figuratively applies to oaths. According to the Arab custom a person while making a solemn promise, used to strike with his right hand to whom the promise was made.

Oaths among the pagan Arabs were of different kinds i.e.

1. Oaths which were a call to God to testify the truth of an assertion of fact, past or present.
2. Promissory oaths which were a sort of pledge to be fulfilled in future. Such oaths were often taken inadvertently.

In the degenerate Pre-Islamic Arab society, it was a practice to take shelter under the pretext of oaths in the name of God, for the commission or omission of an act. Such acts were mostly unjust. “Thus they doubly dishonoured oaths: They took the name of God lightly and on the other hand, they made an oath an excuse for not doing what was right and just.”¹

The Qur’an has strongly condemned such oaths:

“Do not implicate Allah in your oaths to avoid doing good and being pious and keeping peace among men, for Allah hears all and knows every thing.” (Qur’an 2: 224)

In other words the *ayah* implies “Do not swear by Allah that you would refrain from a particular act of kindness. To refrain from a righteous act is in itself bad: To bring in the name of Allah is worse.”

The Qur’an has given an altogether new dimension to oaths. The oaths or the swearings of the Qur’an are ‘calls to witness.’ In the *ayaat* of the Qur’an in which swearings are used, the objects of nature are specified to focus the attention of the addressees.

At several places the Arabic letter '*waw*' is used which signifies a call to witness; for example:

"By those (stars) that rise only to set." (Qur'an 79:1)

"The adjectival particle '*wa*' is used in the sense of a solemn, oath like assertion---a calling to witness, as it were --- meant (as in the expression 'by god'), to give weight to a subsequently stated truth or evidence of the truth".¹

The Qur'anic swearings have been termed 'adjurations' by some scholars. To adjure in English means "to charge or entreat solemnly, as if under oath, or under the penalty of curse."² Thus it may perhaps be not correct to render the Qur'anic swearings used for calling to witness as adjurations.

In other places, the Qur'an has used the words '*la uqsim*'. Usually the words '*la uqsim*' are followed by the '*ayaat*' (signs) of nature which are used for calling to witness, for example:

"Nay, I call to witness the coming down in parts (of this Qur'an) and, behold, this is indeed a most solemn affirmation, if you but knew it". (Qur'an 56:75 and 76)

"I call to witness what you see and what you see not and swear that this is the message sent down from the Lord of the worlds". (Qur'an 69:38 to 43).

In the Qur'an, Allah calls to witness certain phenomena to drive home particular points:

"But nay! I call to witness (Our being) the Lord of all points of sun rise and sun set, and swear that Allah can certainly substitute for the unbelievers a better people." (Qur'an 70:40 and 41).

"Verily, I call to witness the planets that recede, go straight or hide by the night as it dissipates, and by the dawn as it breathes away the darkness, and swear that this is the message delivered by the most honorable messenger." (Qur'an 81:15 to 19)

"But nay! I call to witness the ruddy glow of the sunset, and the night and what it (step by step) unfolds, and the noon, as it grows to its fullness and swear that you shall certainly move from stage to stage." (Qur'an 84:16 to 19).

The truth is here stressed that just as the changing phases of the moon and the alternation of night and day are the outcome of natural laws so too a man is bound to move onward.

"I call to witness this city" (Qur'an 90:1).

That which follows a swearing is used as a witness to support a particular statement of the Qur'an, for example: "Nay! I call to witness the Day of 'Resurrection'. But nay! I call to witness the self-reproaching voice of man's own conscience".

"Does, man think that we cannot assemble his bones. Nay we are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers". (Qur'an 75:1 to 4)

The Qur'an has, in general, used its arguments and substantiated them with examples in a direct and simple manner:

“Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day, and sailing of ships across the ocean with what is useful to man (merchandise), and in (the rain) which Allah sends down from the sky giving thereby life to the earth after it has been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon, and in the changing of the winds, and the clouds which remain obedient between the sky and earth (in all this there are messages indeed) for people who use their reason.” (Qur’an 2:164)

In the above *ayah*, swearing is not specifically resorted to: here neither the letter ‘*waw*’ is used nor the words ‘*la uqsim*’, yet almost the same ‘*ayaat*’ (signs) of nature are used which otherwise follow the swearings.

When swearing is used, argument precedes the conclusive statement. This stylistic device clears the way for assertion. No room is left for the addressee to refute the obvious conclusion drawn.

Swearing can be compared to a concise or pithy saying, through which an idea is fully conveyed to the addressee in a forceful way. Swearing enables the addressee to ponder and to use his own power of reasoning.

This feature has many advantages: The affirmation becomes more forceful than a simple, direct statement due to its emotional appeal. It leaves no room for disputation and clinches an argument. The hearer or reader has no chance to escape from an assertion so strongly supported as to be refutable.

CHAPTER - 2

FIGURES OF SPEECH IN THE QUR'AN

Thought is a power which arises in the individual mind. It is expressed through the medium of words, and it is through words that the idea of one person is communicated to another.

The idea and the word are quite different from each other in both their nature and origin. The idea is a mental conception. The word (when spoken) is a sound, but in a mysterious way sound is harmonized with idea. In human life the beginning of the word is with the names of things. Allah taught Adam the names of all things (Qur'an 2:31). Conceptions are concealed in words, whether they are conceptions of things or those of feelings and emotions.

Prof. Leland Ryken observes “ Literature is an art form, and one of the criteria by which we classify something as literary is the presence of beauty, form, craft and technique.”

A word or group of words used in any composition to give particular emphasis to an idea or sentiment is termed as figure of speech.

If a word is used in a literal sense, it can be termed factual, but if instead it is used for expressing a combination of ideas, it is called a term. For example *shirk*, *Ilah*, *taqwa* are terms in the Qur'an. Similarly if instead of a literal meaning a word borrows a new meaning it is called the figurative use of a word. For example, if animals are called 'cattle', it is a factual statement, but if human beings are compared to animals, as in Qur'an 7:174, it is a figurative use of the word. Thus the Qur'an, in order to present some special concepts, had to use figurative language such as simile, metaphor, etc., in addition to literal language.

The whole realm of figurative language looms large in any consideration of the Qur'an as literature. Figurative language in the Qur'an includes almost all the figures of speech used in any language (Presently only 15 have been discussed) It is hard to find a '*ruku*' in the Qur'an that does not contain figurative language.

An appreciation of the literary artistry of the Qur'an and the realization of its '*ijaz*' began as early as the ninth century.

Abu Bakr Muhammed-al-Baqillani (d. 1013) demonstrated the occurrence in the Qur'an of the figures of speech used by the Arab poets. He identified not less than 34 different figures of speech in his monumental treatise '*Ijaz al-Qur'an*'.

In fact, the Qur'an is rich in figurative terms, of which we use only a very small portion.

A figure of speech is a departure from the ordinary form of expression, or the

ordinary course of ideas, in order to produce a greater effect. A “figure of speech if it has any purpose to serve in literature has to rouse the imagination and through its medium, graphically clinch an idea which in plain language might need an elaborate garb for expression”¹. From ancient times to the present, figurative locutions have been employed by poets and writers to strengthen and embellish their compositions. According to Aristotle: “eloquence is achieved by beautiful tropes”.

The pre-Islamic Arab poets deviated from simple, direct expression and used figures of speech as poetic devices. The poets who took greatest liberties with word-forms were called ‘*umra-al kalam*’, princes of diction.

In sharp contrast to the use of the figures of speech by the pre-Islamic Arab poets which at times appeared to be a poor trick, the Qur’an employs the same figures of speech in a most magnificent way. It is more important as the Qur’an is the un-mediated word of God.

The Qur’an is basically a book of guidance. Even though words used in the Qur’an are, as a rule, taken in their literal meaning, some words have been used in different figures of speech to enable the addressee to fully understand some of the concepts of the Qur’an.

Rhetorical forms therefore, pervade the entire Qur’an; lending it literary quality. Whatever the form, conscious artistry, literary unity and design is evident in the Qur’an which heighten the reader’s attention.

Thus we find a number of figures of speech, also called tropes, in the Qur’an. The Qur’an, for example, has used figurative language to explain certain concepts such as *al-Jannah*, *al-naar*, *al-akhirah*, *al-arsh*, *al-kursi*, *al-sa’at* etc. which are beyond the range of human perception. The concepts behind these terms cannot be fully understood by the human mind, and therefore such concepts have been explained through expressions which the human mind can comprehend.

No human vocabulary can express these concepts as such. The Qur’an has successfully described them in terms and expressions which are generally employed in connection with tangible objects and has used such terms and words which are within the comprehension of the human mind. The figurative words used by the Qur’an cannot be termed ‘*mutashabihaat*’ as some scholars have suggested. The word ‘*mutashabihaat*’ has been rendered as ambiguous and is explained as follows:

“ ‘Ambiguous’ *ayaat* are those whose meaning may have some sort of equivocation. It is obvious that no way of life can be prescribed for man unless a certain amount of knowledge explaining the truth about the universe, about its origin and end, about man’s position in it and other matters of similar importance, is intimated to him. It is also evident that there are truths which lie beyond the range of human perception, and which have always eluded and will continue to elude man. No words exist in the human vocabulary which either express or portray them. We necessarily resort to words and expressions generally employed in connection with tangible objects. In the Qur’an too, this kind of language is

employed in relation to supernatural matters; the *ayaat* which have been characterized as 'ambiguous' refer to such matters.

At best such expressions may serve to either bring man close or to enable him to formulate some view of reality, even if it is a faint one"¹.

What Maulana Mawdudi has said about resorting to words and expressions generally employed in connection with objects is quite correct but he has applied them to '*mutashabihaat*' which may not be acceptable. Moreover it may neither be proper nor correct to use the word 'ambiguous' for the Qur'anic *ayaat*.

The figurative words used by the Qur'an are in no way ambiguous or unintelligible. Similarly, it may not be correct to say that any *ayah* or word of the Qur'an has two meanings or can be interpreted in two ways. On the other hand, the Qur'anic expressions are very clear. The purpose of the Qur'an is fully served by these expressions. It is the beauty of the Qur'an that without knowing the precise nature and other particulars of heaven, hell, the hereafter, doomsday etc., one can grasp their real significance.

The Qur'an, as observed above, has used effective and forceful language to successfully convey its lofty ideas to us human beings. The Qur'an speaks through anecdotes and parables which are extremely apt and go straight to the hearts of the listeners. It instructs through hints and suggestions. According to the Qur'anic approach, examples serve better than precept. It has used various figures of speech which every student of the Qur'an should be well acquainted with, in order to understand its full meaning. "It will be unfair to the Qur'an, the '*Kitab-al mubeen*', the open book, to take the literal sense of its figurative language, or to read any hidden meaning into it." ¹

The combination of the religious and the literary approaches to the Qur'an has made the study of the Qur'an from the literary point of view different from the study of other literature.

A literary approach to the Qur'an is necessary because the Qur'an is, a work of literature; it has its own procedures and corresponding rules of interpretations. It will yield its meanings fully only if explored in terms of its kinds of writing. Better understanding of the Qur'an mainly depends on the reader's ability to interpret the figurative language and the rhetorical devices used in the Qur'an.

1. Simile and Parable

Simile:-

When one thing is compared to another because of mutual resemblance, it is called a simile.

A simile is "an explicit comparison between two different things, actions or

feelings, using the words 'as' or 'like'."²

A simile is usually introduced by such words as, 'like' 'as' or 'so'. A comparison of two things of the same kind is not a simile.

The Qur'an has very frequently used this figure of speech to convey its message. The similes of the Qur'an are not far fetched. It is however, necessary to have a clear picture of what the words meant for the first addressees of the Qur'an. Then the simile will be seen to have a quite startlingly effective impact. While showing the resemblance, the Qur'an makes it clear that the literal meanings are not to be considered. The Qur'an draws the attention towards the resemblance by negating the literal meaning and introducing the simile by such words as 'like', 'as', etc.

The literal meanings are negated by prefixing the Arabic alphabet 'kaf' (meaning similar or like) such as:

"Then your hearts hardened and became
like rocks, or even harder." (Qur'an 2:74)

Here the literal meaning of the word 'rocks' is negated by prefixing with the word 'like'.

Parable:

Parable is a comparison or similitude. It is a narrative of an interesting or striking incident or event in which some thing is expressed in a general way in terms of something else. By parables ethico-religious relations are typically set forth. It is an account or anecdote told to illustrate a fundamental truth. Use of this term is figurative.

"A parable is a picturesque figure of language in which an analogy refers to a similar but different reality".¹

It is necessary for a parable to contain an element of narration, although this narration is not of a particular incident (or a story), but of a general nature.

Differences between simile and parable:-

There is a subtle difference between simile and parable. In a simile, a comparison is made and the similarity is pointed out, whereas in a parable, the similarity is shown by citing the example, followed by vivid, imaginative and graphic description. In other words a simile is a comparison between two things, whereas a parable is a comparison of two situations.

Difference between Allegory and Parable:-

"An allegory consists of a string of metaphors that have individual meanings,

whereas a parable is essentially a single metaphor possessing a single meaning. The details of a parable, then, should not be pressed for meaning; rather, one should seek only its basic point of comparison."¹

Differences between narrative and parable:-

A narrative is a story or an account. It is a tale or recital of facts. For example, in a narrative, a specific historical event would be cited, whereas in a parable an example of event is given in a general way. A parable is not a story.

Prophet Isa conveyed his message mostly in parables. In his parables he repeatedly used illustrations from daily life. According to Mark, Prophet Isa taught in parables in order to convey his message.

Says the New Testament:

1. He (Jesus) never spoke to them except in parables; but privately to his disciples he explained everything." (Mark 4:34)
2. In all his teachings to the crowds Jesus spoke in parables; in fact he never spoke to them without a parable; thus making good the prophecy of Isaiah:

I will open my mouth in parables;

I will utter things kept secret since the world was made. (Matthew 13: 34, 35)

"In contrast to Aristotelian tradition, no sharp distinction is drawn in the Bible between simile/allegory and metaphor/ parable."¹

The Qur'an has used many parables and has termed them '*amsaal*'. The parables in the Qur'an have been used for conveying and disseminating knowledge and wisdom so that man can draw inspiration from them. Allah sets forth similitude (parables) to bring home certain basic truths. According to Zamakhshari, "Parabolic style is to illustrate, by means of something which we know from our experience of something that is beyond the reach of our perception." There are a number of parables in the Qur'an, each one to convey some basic truth and then to draw morals therefrom.

The Qur'an asserts that it has propounded parables for men:

1. "Thus, indeed, we have propounded unto men all kinds of parables in this Qur'an, so that they might think themselves." (Qur'an 39:27)
2. " and (all) such parables We have propounded unto men. so that they might (learn to) think." (Qur'an 59:21)
3. "Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things lowest as well as highest. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord. Those who reject faith say: what does Allah mean by such similitude. By such similitude Allah leads many to the right path and He causes many to astray." (Qur'an

2:26)

4. "Thus does Allah set forth parables (*amsaal*).” (Qur'an 13:17)
5. "So Allah sets forth parables (*amsaal*).” (Qur'an 14:25)
6. "We held out examples (*amsaal*) before you.” (Qur'an 14:46)
7. "And so We propound these parables unto men: but none can grasp their innermost meaning save those who (of Us) are aware.” (Qur'an 29:43)

When parables are used in the Qur'an, the word '*masala*' is mostly used to indicate that it is a parable.

In certain *ayaat* of the Qur'an, to explain a particular universal truth or situation, Allah gives the examples (*amsaal*) of things which are already in the observation of human beings:

1. To bring home the fact that of all the efforts of man, only such efforts will survive which are for the good of humanity, the Qur'an gives the parable of foam during the floods and the scum on the surface of a melted ore, which soon disappear, while the water and metal (which are useful for mankind), remain. (Qur'an 13:17)
2. To explain that the benefits of a good word will be eternal, the similitude (*masal*) of a healthy tree which yields fruits in all seasons is given. (Qur'an 14:24)
3. To expose the futility of relying on anyone other than Allah, the parable of the spider web is given: The spider lays the trap by relying on the web, which is in fact the frailest of all houses. (Qur'an 29:41)
4. To show the enormous strength of the Qur'an in warning human beings, the parable is given that had Allah sent down the Qur'an on the mountain, it would have crumbled down in fear of Allah. (Qur'an 59:21)

The Qur'an uses relics of the past as similitude as well:

"And you resided (as successors) in the dwellings of those who had wronged themselves, and it was made plain to you how we dealt with them; and struck out parables (*amsaal*) for you.” (Qur'an 14:45)

In this case, taking lessons from history and comparing one's own life with the lives of previous generations and their fate or doom is also used as a parable (*masal*).

As stated above when parables are used in the Qur'an, the word *masala* is invariably used to indicate their presence. However, in certain *ayaat*, the word *masala* is not to be found. For example, there is no use of the word in 2:266.

After giving two parables in *ayaat* 2:264 and 2:265, the Qur'an poses a crucial but pertinent question:

"Would any of you desire to have a garden of date palms and vines through which running waters flow and have all manner of fruit therein - and then be taken by old age, with only weak children to (look after) him - and then (see) it smitten by a fiery whirlwind and utterly scorched. In this way Allah makes clear his messages to you, so that you might reflect." (2:266)

This cannot be regarded as parable, An undesirable situation is presented in allegorical, albeit graphic terms. It is obvious that no one would like to see his flourishing garden destroyed in his old age. This question makes one reflect upon and compare his plight when he finds that at the end of his life he is empty handed as far as good deeds are concerned.

Similarly *ayaat* 7:57 and 7:58 are not parables as such; the word '*masala*' is not used. In these *ayaat* the winds are compared to the Divine message. The land is compared to men. In the same way as rainfall revives the dead earth, so Divine guidance brings the dormant people back to life. Only the righteous people benefit from the Divine guidance. If the people are not righteous, they cannot benefit from it.

Due to graphic details, it appears that parables are used in these *ayaat*. No incident is mentioned in a general way and therefore the allegorical description cannot be termed as parable.

The parable in 18:32-44 is most expansive. This is to illustrate the comparison between two companions, one is a rich unbeliever and the other is a believer but not so rich. The unbeliever said to his companion, "I have more wealth, honor and power than you." The believer replied, "If you have more wealth because of your gardens, our Lord could give me something better than your garden". Then Allah destroyed the gardens and the owner realized that there was none to help him against Allah.

Parable in *ayah* 7:176.

"Now had We so willed We could indeed have exalted him through those signs, but he clung to earthly life and followed his carnal desires. Thus in parable is that of the dog who lolls out his tongue whether you attack him or leave him alone. Such is the parable of those who reject Our signs as false. Narrate to them these parables that they may reflect".

The parables of the Qur'an were addressed to the contemporaries of the prophet, whereas the basic point of comparison is not only meant for them but for the posterity. It is therefore, necessary to understand their meaning in their original setting. Moreover the Qur'anic parables should be interpreted in the light of the totality of their teachings.

2. Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which words are used to indicate something different from its literal meaning. It is an implied simile. It, does not, like the simile, state that the thing is like another or acts as another, but takes that for granted and proceeds as if the two things were one.

Metaphor means borrowing. It is a figure of speech in which a word loses its literal meaning and borrows a new one. It is an unstated comparison, where the object compared is identical to the object of comparison. A metaphor has a double meaning; two concepts come to mind instead of just one, and both have some resemblance and unity. In other words a metaphor means the use of a word in a figurative sense in such a manner that the relationship of resemblance between the real and the figurative meaning is maintained, but the resemblance is not stated.

The meaning of words is expanded through similes and metaphors. A metaphor creates two concepts instead of one, but both have similarity and unity in them.

A metaphor is an effective means of expression and the creation of meaning.

According to Chris Baldick, a metaphor is “the most important and widespread figure of speech in which one thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another thing, idea or action, so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two. In metaphor, this resemblance is assumed as an imaginary identity rather than directly stated as a comparison; referring to a man as ‘that pig’ or saying, ‘he is a pig’ is metaphorical, whereas ‘he is like a pig’ is a simile.”¹

Thus when we say, “He fought like a lion”, we use a simile, but when we say “He was a lion in the fight” we use a metaphor.

Every simile can be compressed into a metaphor and every metaphor can be expanded into a simile.

The Qur’an has used metaphors to convey its message. The word ‘*shayatin*’ (plural of *shaytan*) in certain cases is used as a metaphor, for example *ayaat* 2:14, 6:112 etc. In these *ayaat* ‘*shayatin*’ denotes people who, through their insolent persistence in evil doing, have become like devils. In fact, by this metaphor the Qur’an refers to all evil forces inherent in man. The ‘scattered pearls’ in *ayah* 76:19 is also a metaphor used for the children in paradise.

1. In *ayaat* 2:115, 3:103, 57:29 the words ‘face of Allah’, ‘cable of Allah’, and ‘hand of Allah’ are used respectively as metaphors. In the above *ayaat*, the surface meanings cannot be accepted. The words ‘face’, ‘cable’, and ‘hand’ cannot be taken literally. These words have been used in a way in which the literal and figurative meanings show a similarity, but that similarity has not been classified. Therefore these words (‘face’, ‘cable’ and ‘hand’) should be considered as metaphors.

2. The Qur'an says:

" it is they who carry the shackles (of their own making) around their necks; and it is they who are destined for the fire, therein to abide." (Qur'an 13:5)

Here, 'shackles' is "a metaphor of man's wilful self-abandonment to false values and evil ways, and of the resulting enslavement of the spirit (Cf Zamakhshari, Razi, Baydawi)" ¹.

Allah's placing 'shackles' around the sinners' necks (36:08) is also a metaphor. This metaphor is similar to Allah's sealing the hearts of the sinners. (02:07). In this *ayah*, the "reference (is) to the natural law instituted by God, whereby a person who persistently adheres to false beliefs and refuses to listen to the voice of truth gradually loses the ability to perceive the truth, 'so that finally, as it were, a seal is set upon his heart'. (Raghib)" ².

3. "...We could surely have deprived them (the sinners) of their right, so that they would stray forever from the (right) way: for how could they have insight (into what is true?)" (Qur'an 36:66)

4. "We could have deprived them of their sight" or "We could have blotted their eyes" is a metaphor for "We could have created them morally blind."

5. "..... they have bartered the guidance for error; (but) their trade has not turned out profitable" (Qur'an 2:16)

Other Metaphorical forms, such as those of metonymy, parable and allegory are frequently used in the Qur'an.

3. Symbolism

Symbol:

In the simplest sense, a symbol is 'something that stands for, represents or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by some accidental or conventional relation) especially a material object representing or taken to represent something immaterial or abstract.'" ^[2]

"A symbol is characterized not by its uniformity but by its versatility." ^[3]

In literal usage, however, a symbol is an especially evocative kind of image: that is, a word or phrase referring to a concrete object, scene or action which also has some further significance associated with it: a rose, etc.

Similes, metaphors and symbols are the tools whereby expression is made more effective. Unlike similes and metaphors, in a symbol there is no question of comparison. The words themselves explain the subject and the literal meaning is liberated from its trammels. The functions of simile, metaphor and metonymy are also performed by the symbol.

“A symbol differs from a metaphor in that its application is left open as an unstated suggestion... the metaphor ties a concrete image... symbol... remains mysteriously indeterminate in its possible meanings.”^[4]

Symbols reveal their meaning gradually and through direct human attention to the eternal realities of the universe like the Day of Judgment..... realities which are not comprehensible to the human mind.

Every word can assume the status of a metaphor, a simile, an allusion, or a symbol. Ideas and conceptions are embellished by means of similes and metaphors, and a figurative language is adopted in place of a literal one. When the scope of ideas and conceptions are wider, some metaphors and other figures of speech are continuously used, and this is the beginning of symbolism. In other words, a metaphor assumes the status of a symbol through a multiplicity of usage.

In a symbol, the same word is expanded in meaning so much so that its implication becomes symbolic for an entire life, or for some aspects of life.

Literature at its highest level has many layers, and contains a multiple meanings, in other words, ideas are expressed at two or more levels through symbols. A literary masterpiece cannot be fully understood unless these symbols are kept in mind. For understanding these symbols, it is necessary to know the background of their usage.

Great literature is mostly introspective. In it, words do not completely convey the meaning and therefore, symbols are used for the full expression of ideas. In other words, many areas of human consciousness do not come within the grasp of words. When words fail to express these subtle shades of meaning, a suitable symbol is employed which creates the necessary atmosphere for them.

Words become associated with a limited range of meaning because of their use for centuries. When a movement brings new ideas and new concepts, their expression requires a new medium. In higher literature, symbols are often used for universal implications. They are derived from the currents and crosscurrents of life in order to enable them to express new ideas and emotions.

The use of symbols in literature is called ‘symbolism’. A basic problem of symbolism is the proper selection of symbols. In the selection of symbols, it has to be borne in mind that there should be resemblance and relationship in characteristics. Symbolism tends to be very compact. Where there is a mythological element, the use of symbolism is comparatively more frequent. In most of the religious books symbols are used. Symbols themselves have no meaning. It is the writer who assigns meaning to the symbols and his method of approach determines the meaning of the symbols. If emotions have central position in description, the use of symbols becomes necessary. The emotions of pain, sorrow, happiness and other subtle feelings cannot be fully expressed without the use of symbols. This method of expression is in every way different from the one in which the symbols are used without the element of emotion.

The Qur’an had the problem of presenting its universal message keeping in

view eternal realities, wisdom and mental background and the limitations of the addressee.

The vast vocabulary of the Arabic language was incapable of expressing certain concepts; therefore Allah created the necessary atmosphere for comprehending them through the medium of symbols.

Words become confined to a limited atmosphere because of their usage over a long period of time. The Qur'an introduced new ideas and new concepts and for their expression it provided new terms and continuously used metaphors. The Qur'an also introduced the usage of symbols. Accordingly, we find symbolism in the Qur'an. In other words, metaphors assumed the status of symbols on account of their frequency of usage. It is one of the miracles of the Qur'an that we become aware of the situation in our after-life during our lifetime only through the means of symbols.

In mathematics, the meaning of a symbol is definite and fixed, there is no possibility of deviation in it. However, unlike mathematics, in higher literature, the meaning is most undetermined. In other words, it always has a possibility of alteration or deviation. The Qur'an, being an eternal message, the symbols in it are not subject to revision. The meanings assigned to a symbol must last forever, and this is one of the miracles of the Qur'an. It has successfully expressed feelings which cannot be expressed in normal words. The Qur'an's figurative style creates an atmosphere in which concepts and meanings appear in the form of symbols. For example, the Qur'an has used '*subh*' (morning) as a symbol for the appointed time of chastisement as in (11:67, 11:81, 11:94) or 'evil dawn' as in (Qur'an 37:177). Even the derivative of '*subh*' ie. '*yusbihun*' (Qur'an 23:40) is used to mean smitten.

Assessing the attitude of Firaun and his people Prophet Musa addressed them and said:

"I am an apostle (sent) unto you, worthy of trust, and exalt not yourselves against Allah; for, verily, I come unto you with a manifest authority (from Him); and behold, it is with my Sustainer - and your Sustainer ---- that I seek refuge against your stoning (*tarjumun*)."

(Qur'an 44:18-20)

The expression '*tarjumun*' in the above *ayaat* has a symbolic meaning indicating the entire attitude of Firaun and his people. According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali "Stoning may be here symbolical of any injury or vilification."¹

Prophet Musa was facing rejection, ridicule, condemnation, vilification, denunciation etc. all at a time which cannot be represented by any other word except 'stoning'.

A symbolical reference is called allusion. Allusion is an indirect reference in a discourse by passing mention or quotation, to something generally familiar.

Salat has also been used as a symbol in the Qur'an. When Prophet Shoaib

conveyed the message to the people of Madyan, they said:

“Oh Shoaib, does your *salat* command you that we give up all that our forefathers were wont to worship or that we refrain from doing whatever we please with our possession.” (Qur’an 11:87)

In the above *ayah* the word *salat* is used as a symbol for the word *din*.

In *Surah* 111, ‘*Abu Lahab*’ is used as a symbol for those who oppose the ‘Divine Message’.

In the Qur’an ‘the winds’ is used as a symbol for intellectual progress and hope.

There is a clear comparison between ‘the winds’ and the ‘*ayaat*’ of the Qur’an. Just as winds may either bring clouds and rain as a hope for the crops, or bring disaster, the *ayaat* of Allah also bring hope to the believers and fear to the unbelievers. It is therefore, apt that the Qur’an has used wind and rain as symbols of intellectual progress. Says the Qur’an:

“And it is He who sends the winds as a glad tiding of His coming grace - so that, when they have brought heavy clouds, We may drive them towards dead land and cause thereby water to descend; and by this means do We cause all manner of fruit to come forth: (and this) you ought to keep in mind.” (Qur’an 7:57)

“As for the good land, its vegetation comes forth (in abundance) by its Sustainer’s leave, whereas from bad it comes forth but poorly. Thus do we give many facets to Our messages for (the benefit of) people who are grateful.” (Qur’an 7:58)

4. Allegory

Allegory is a figure of speech in which a name of a descriptive term is transferred to a subject with which it has some similarity. In other words, allegory is the “description of a subject under the guise (or image) of some other object of aptly suggested resemblance”. It is “an extended metaphor”.^[5]

According to Chris Baldick, allegory is “a story or visual image with a distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning. The principle technique of allegory is personification where abstract qualities are given human shape. An allegory may be conceived as a metaphor that is extended into a structural system. In written narrative, allegory involves a continuous parallel between two (or more) levels of meaning in story”.^[6]

According to Shipley, it is “distinguished from metaphor and parable as an extended story that may hold interest for the surface tale”.^[7]

A symbolical reference is also called allusion. Allusion is an indirect reference in a discourse by passing mention or quotation, to something generally familiar.

The interpretation of an authoritative text as having a deeper meaning than what its words seem to suggest was an old practice among the Greeks.

In English literature "The Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan is a typical allegory in which the central character is called "Every man". The name "Everyman" is significant and gives the clue to the real subject. This allegory describes the ups and downs in the spiritual life of "Everyman", which in fact, is a description of the ups and downs of the religious life of every person.

Another allegory in English literature is "The Battle of the Books" by Jonathan Swift. In this allegory a controversy between the relative merits of ancient and modern writers is represented by a dialogue between a bee and a spider.

In this allegory the bee represents the ancient writers. Just as the bee provides honey and wax, the ancient writers through original writings provide knowledge and culture which have been summed up in the phrase of "Sweetness and light". On the other hand, the spider represents the modern writers. Just as the spider does not create anything new but only makes frail cobwebs, modern writers have not made any real contribution to knowledge. Thus the bee and the spider are allegorical figures.

Allegorical narration is also called 'apologue'. It is an illustration of something that is beyond the reach of our perception by means of something which we know. It is intended to convey a useful moral lesson.

We find beautiful allegorical narrations, or apologues, in the Qur'an which convey a lasting message concerning higher faculties of mind intended to benefit the lives of the adherents of Islam.

One such allegorical narration is the story of Adam, which is also found in the Bible.

Portions of the story of Adam are found in *Surah Al-Baqara*, *Surah Al-Araf*, *Surah Bani Israil* and *Surah Ta-Ha*. The story of Adam, as found in the Qur'an, is as follows:

Allah said to the Angels, "I will make a *Khalifah* on earth" (Qur'an 2:30). He created Adam from dust (Qur'an 3:59), and gave him shape (Qur'an 7:11). Allah

fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him something of His spirit. (Qur'an 32:9) Allah taught him the names and nature of all things. (Qur'an 2:31) Then He tested both the angels and Adam (Qur'an 2:31-33). After Adam was successful in the test, Allah ordered the angels to bow down to Adam, which they all did, except Iblees (Qur'an 2:34, 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116). Allah asked Adam and his wife to dwell in the Garden (*Jannah*) and to eat freely but prohibited them from eating 'the tree' (*Shajarah*) (Qur'an 2:35, 7:19). Allah warned them that if they approached 'the tree' they would be wrongdoers. (Qur'an 7:19) Allah said, "O Adam! Verily *Satan* is your enemy and of your wife; Let him not drive you out of the Garden (of bliss) so that you are landed in misery; Verily, there (in the Garden of bliss) you will have no hunger, nakedness, thirst or exposure to the sun" (Qur'an 20:117-119).

However, *Satan* tempted them and suggested (evil) to them in order to reveal their hidden parts of which they were not (till then) aware, and said, "O Adam! Shall I lead you to 'the tree of Eternity' and to a kingdom that never decays?" (Qur'an 20:120) "Your Lord has forbidden you (to go near) this tree, that you may not become immortal" (Qur'an 7:20). *Satan* swore to them both that he was their sincere advisor. (Qur'an 7:21). So, it was by deceit that *Satan* brought about their fall; when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies (Qur'an 20:121). Thus *Satan* had Adam and his wife banished from the (blissful) state they were in.

Allah said to them,

"Did I not forbid you the tree and tell you that *Satan* was your avowed enemy?" (Qur'an 7:22).

He then ordered,

"Get (all of) you down with enmity between yourselves and earth shall be your dwelling place for a time ordained" (Qur'an 2:36).

Then words (of repentance) were inspired to Adam (Qur'an 2:37). Adam and his wife said,

"O Lord! We have wronged our own soul; if you forgive us not and bestow not upon us your mercy, we shall certainly be lost" (Qur'an 7:23).

Allah forgave them (Qur'an 2:37) and said, "Get you down with enmity between yourselves and earth shall be your dwelling place for a time ordained" (Qur'an 7:24)

"And if guidance comes from Me, there shall be no fear for those who follow my guidance" (Qur'an 2:38).

The story of Adam as narrated by the Qur'an can be termed as one such allegory. In this story Adam is the archetype of all mankind, who has been presented as an allegorical figure. It is the story of a man depicting human nature. The allegory starts with a revelation of the Divine design that Allah intended to make Adam a *Khalifah*, (or ruler on Earth). Although Adam is mentioned in the allegory, the purport is to say that 'man' is made a '*Khalifah*'. Dust is indicated as the common source of creation of Adam and of man. Breathing the soul represents the fact that every human being is endowed with the Divine gift of distinguishing between right and wrong.

Allah then brought about a competition in knowledge between the angels, representing all objects of nature and Adam representing mankind, asking the former to name things (to describe their nature). The angels could not do so, but Adam could.

In this narrative regarding the creation of Adam, the emphasis is on the following points:

1. Man is endowed with the faculty of knowledge and discretion. To indicate that this faculty is similar in nature to the divine faculty, the words used are:

"I breathed into Adam of My spirit" (Qur'an 15:29).

2. The evil force only looked at the source of man's creation i.e., clay and failed to appreciate man's unique faculty of knowledge and consciousness.

3. Evil suggestions affect only those persons who respond to them.

It was after Adam (as standing for all mankind) had been so taught the angels were asked to bow down to him, for by the grace of Allah his status had actually been raised higher.

Adam was asked not to approach the *Shajarah*. "It was a trial in which Adam was placed to demonstrate the fact that however may man be equipped with wisdom and knowledge, he cannot of himself find the way to rectitude without guidance from God."¹

It may, here be noticed that '*la taqrabun*' (Do not go near), is not used for corporeal approach.

In a different context the Qur'an had used the word '*la taqrabun*' in the following *ayaat*:

1. "Do not approach them (your wives) until they have been clean". (Qur'an 2:222)
2. "Do not go near indecency". (Qur'an 6:151)
3. "Do not go near adultery" (Qur'an 17:32)

In the above *ayaat* the Qur'an uses the word '*la taqrabun*' for the intangible.

It may be noted that *Al-shajarah* is a beautiful allegory for the act of procreation. The Qur'an, while dealing with the delicate relationship of sex, has conveyed the idea in a most decent manner.

Allah warned Adam saying, “*Satan* is your enemy, and of your wife.” Through this the human beings are warned against ‘the provocation for evil from an outside source’. In the story *Satan* tempted Adam and his wife to approach *Al-shajarah* regarding it as the tree of Eternity. Through this allegorical expression, it is shown that man has an inherent desire to become immortal. Since he is a mortal being, man according to his limited thinking, found the only way to become immortal was to procreate.

When Adam and his wife disobeyed Allah and indulged in sex, Allah said, “Get (all of) you down with enmity between yourselves, and earth shall be your dwelling place for a time ordained”. Here, while addressing Adam and his wife, Allah has used the plural form. Some exegetes are of the opinion that Allah has included *Satan* in addition to ‘the couple’. However, *Satan* is obviously excluded by the words “earth shall be your dwelling place for a time ordained”. Here the address is to the progeny of Adam and it is the beauty of the allegory that the allegorical meaning has been clearly suggested.

It is mentioned in the allegory that words of repentance were inspired to Adam and his wife and admitting their mistake, they begged for forgiveness. Accordingly, Allah forgave them. Here it is also shown that man, who is prone to disobedience has been endowed with the faculty of realizing the disobedience as a sin, and if he/she repents and [asks](#) for forgiveness, Allah is ever-forgiving.

In the allegory Allah says to Adam that if guidance comes from Him, there shall be no fear for those who follow it. Here again, through Adam, the address is to all mankind.

No doubt the story of Adam is borrowed from the Bible, which was current among the ‘People of the Book’. The Qur’an has used it as an allegory, and made it a convenient vehicle to convey its message. The story of Adam, as told in the Bible, in its present form, cannot be taken as an allegory.

However, the story of Adam in the Qur’an cannot be taken as real history. If taken literally it is difficult to believe that what is described actually did happen. If taken as an allegory, the story becomes meaningful.

Another allegory is the story of Prophet Suleyman’s death. An incident is mentioned in the (Qur’an 34:14) where the death of Prophet Suleyman was not made news to the laborers (*jinn*). It was made known only through the termite which ate up his staff.

The Solomonic legend was part of ancient Arabian tradition according to which “Solomon died on his throne, leaning forward on his staff, and for a long length of time nobody became aware of his death; with the result that the (laborers

who were) constrained to work for him, went on laboring at the heavy tasks assigned to them. (His death was known to the laborers only when) termite ate away Solomon's staff, and his body, deprived of support, fell to the ground.

The Qur'an uses the legend to convey its teachings "This story only hinted at in its outline; is apparently used here as an allegory^[8]". Through the allegorical illustration the reference is to the weak rule of Suleyman's son and successor, Rehoboam, who led a life of luxury and ease; and instead of acting on the advice of the older men, yielded to the pleasure seeking wishes of his companions. (1 Kings 12:13)

"The casting away of his staff signifies the disruption of the Kingdom. The *Jinn*, as already remarked, mean the rebellious tribes who had been reduced to subjection by Solomon, and who remained in subjection to the Israelites for a time, until the Kingdom was shattered".^[9]

5. Personification:

Personification is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects and abstract notions are spoken of as having life and intelligence. Personification is "the act of personifying; especially as a rhetorical figure or species of metaphor."^[10] In personification, an imaginary person is conceived as representing a thing or abstraction. In other words, in personification a person or thing is viewed as embodying a quality etc. or as exemplified in a striking manner, an incarnation (of something). It is a "dramatic representation or literary description of a person or thing."^[11]

According to Chris Baldick it is "a figure of speech by which animals, abstract ideas or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human"^[12].

According to Harry Shaw it is "a figure of speech by which abstraction, animals, ideas and inanimate objects are endowed with human form, character, trait or sensibilities".^[13]

Syed Qutub is perhaps the first scholar who has discussed personification as a stylistic feature of the Qur'an.

Some of the examples of personification in the Qur'an are as follows:

1. "Verily We! We did offer the trust the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and shrank therefore. Yet man took it up for, verily he was very iniquitous and very ignorant." (Qur'an 33:72)
2. "..... We caused them to become (one of those) tales (or things long past), and scattered them in countless fragments". (Qur'an 34:19)
3. "And heavens and the earth wept not over them (the children of Israel) nor

were they respited. " (Qur'an 44:29)

4. "This Book of Ours speaks against you with truth; verily We have been setting down whatsoever you have been working." (Qur'an 45:29)

5. "The Day when We will ask Hell: 'Art thou full?....' and it will answer 'is there yet more (for me)?'." (Qur'an 50:30)

6. "And when the female infant buried alive shall be asked: Was it for any crime that she had been put to death". (Qur'an 81:8 and 9)

6. Apostrophe

An apostrophe is a rhetorical figure in which a speaker or writer makes a direct exclamatory address to the dead, the absent, or to a personified object or idea. It is a "device by which an actor turns from his audience, or a writer from his readers, to address a person who is usually either absent or deceased, an inanimate object, or an abstract idea."¹ This figure of speech is a special form of personification. It is an address to some one or something absent as though they or it were present.

There are very good examples of Apostrophe in the Qur'an. Some of them are as follows:

And it was said:

"O earth! swallow up/down your water, and O Sky! Withhold (your rain)" (Qur'an 11:14).

We said:

"O Fire! be thou cool, and to Ibrahim, a safety" (Qur'an 21:69)

"And We bestowed grace from Us (and We said): 'O ye mountains! sing ye back the praises of Allah with him (Dawood)! and ye birds! (also)' and We made the iron soft for him." (Qur'an 34:10)

" The Day when We will ask Hell: 'Art thou full?' " (Qur'an 50:30)

(As a direct exclamatory address the above *ayah* is an example of 'apostrophe'. As the Hell is personified it is also an example of personification).

7. Hyperbole (Mubalagha)

Hyperbole is a "figure of speech consisting in exaggerated statement, used to express strong feeling or produce a strong impression and not intended to be taken literally".^[14] It is a 'statement which is made emphatic by over statement. Hyperbole is used for the sake of emphasis or rhetorical effect.

"It is an "exaggeration for the sake of emphasis'; in figure of speech; not meant literally."^[15]

According to Al-Baqillani (d. 1013) '*mubalagha*' means little else than 'emphasizing.'^[16]

The Qur'an has used hyperbole to make its address more effective:

1. "Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, verily you would have seen it humbling itself and cleaving asunder for fear of Allah." (Qur'an 59:21)
2. "Verily, We did offer the trust to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to bear it and shrank therefore. Yet, man took it up for, verily, he was very iniquitous and very ignorant." (Qur'an 33:72)
3. "On the Day (of Resurrection) when you behold it, every woman that feeds a child at her breast will utterly forget her nursing, and every woman heavy with child will bring forth her burden (before her time); and it will seem to you that all mankind is drunk, although they will not be drunk- But vehement will be (their dread of) Allah's chastisement". (Qur'an 22:2).
4. "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is (encased) in glass, the glass (shining) like a radiant star: (a lamp) lit from a blessed tree, an olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west-the oil whereof (is so bright that) it would well-nigh give light (of itself) even though fire had not touched it: light upon light..." (Qur'an 24:35).

8. Aposiopesis

Aposiopesis is "a figure in which the speaker suddenly halts, as if unable or unwilling to proceed."¹ This figure of speech in rhetoric is used to heighten the effect of the suddenness of a statement emphasizing the tremendous impact of an event.

The Qur'an has used this figure of speech most effectively:

Hud was an Arabian prophet sent to the people of 'Ad, who occupied a large tract of country in Southern Arabia. The people were great builders. They irrigated the land with a network of canals. They forsook Allah and oppressed their people. As a warning from Allah, they were afflicted with famine which lasted for three years. But they did not heed. Then a terrible blast of wind destroyed them. The calamity was sudden and quite unexpected. The Qur'an, with the main purpose of inviting the readers to draw a lesson and to describe the calamity in the most effective language says:

"Then they (the people of 'Ad) saw a cloud, traversing the sky advancing toward their valleys, they said: 'This is just a passing cloud that will bring us rain.' (Prophet Hud said) 'No. It is what you did seek to hasten, a blast wherein is a grievous

punishment. It will destroy everything at the bidding of its Lord.” (Qur’an 46:21, 25)

It is at this juncture that the Qur’an uses the figure of speech, aposiopesis, to heighten the effect of the suddenness and completeness of the great calamity:

“So in the morning! There was nothing but their ruined houses. That is how We requite the sinners.” (Qur’an 46:25)

The Qur’an has used ‘aposiopesis’ in the following *ayah*:

“And so, when they embark on a ship (and find themselves in danger) they call upon Allah (at that moment) being sincere in their faith in Him alone; but when He brings them safe to land, behold! They give a share (of their worship to others)”. (Qur’an 29:65)

In the above rendering of this *ayah*, the word ‘behold’ represents the sudden halt used in the original text of the Qur’an.

Similarly the Qur’an has restored to aposiopesis in the following *ayah*:

“When We let men a taste of (Our) mercy, they rejoice in it but if evil afflicts them as an outcome of what their (own) hands have wrought they are in despair”. (Qur’an 30:36)

Here again the word ‘lo’ represents the pause in the original text, intended to heighten the effect of the statement.

9. Metonymy (*kinayah*)

Metonymy (literally, a change of name) is a figure of speech “in which the name of an attribute or adjunct is substituted for that of the thing meant, e.g. ‘sceptre’ for authority”.^[17]

It is a statement from which another statement is derived.

A well-known metonymic saying in English is: “the pen is mightier than the sword”. (i.e. writing is more powerful than warfare.)

In metonymy, an object is designated by the name of something which is generally associated with it. Metonymy means a secret implication or a concealed idea. It has compactness instead of expansion. Words used in metonymy have a meaning different from their literal meaning. But they can contain literal meaning as well.

According to Chris Baldick Metonymy “involves establishing relationships of contiguity between two things, whereas metaphor establishes relationships of

similarity between them.”^[18]

The difference between metonymy and metaphor is that metonymy has words which are used in a non-literal sense in such a way that they can also have literal meaning. If the word does not have literal meanings then it is a metaphor.

Some metonyms when used often become idioms. For the full understanding of such idioms, it is necessary to know their metonymic use. It is with this purpose, that they have been discussed under both.

The Qur'an has also used metonymy to convey ideas and concepts. For example:

1. “Entering houses from the rear” (Qur'an 2:189) is used in the Qur'an as a metonym for deviating from the right path. It amounts to approaching questions of faith through the ‘back door.’
2. The word ‘*sama*’ literally sky, was often used in classical Arabic as a metonym for rain. The Qur'an has also used this metonym.
3. ‘*Ma baina aidihim wa ma khalfahum*’ ‘from between his hands and from behind him’ (Qur'an 2:255) The expressions ‘between his hands’ and ‘behind him’ are metonyms for something “perceivable by him” and something “hidden from him” respectively. The worldly ‘guards and aids’ on which a sinner relies may be tangible (like wealth, progeny etc.) or intangible (like personal power, high social status, or the belief in one’s luck): and this explains the phrase ‘both such as can be perceived by him’ and such as ‘are hidden from him.’
4. The Qur'an has used the expression ‘*yasjud*’ (prostrate himself or prostrate themselves) as a metonym for complete submission to His Will. (natural laws decreed by Him). (Qur'an 13:15, etc)
5. The word ‘*yaqeen*’ certainly is often used in the Qur'an as a metonym for death. (Qur'an 15:19)
6. *Akhfiz lahuma Janaha* (Qur'an 17:24) Literally means “lower for them the wings of humility and affection.” It is a metonymical expression evocative of a bird that lovingly spreads its wings over its offspring.
7. Adam is used in the Qur'an as a metonym for the whole human race. (Qur'an 17:61).
8. ‘*Saba*’ (Qur'an 31:27) and ‘*saba'een*’ (Qur'an 9:80) are used in the Qur'an as a metonym for several. According to Mohammed Asad, number nine in (Qur'an 17:101) is also a metonym for several: “in my opinion, however, the number nine may be no more than metonym for several, just as the numbers seven and seventy

are often used in classical Arabic to denote several or many.”^[19]

9. *Aurasnaha* (Qur'an 26:59)

The reference to heritage in this and similar context is a metonym for Allah's granting on the oppressed of a life of well-being and dignity.

10. The word '*wajha*' (face) (Qur'an 30:30) "is often used in the Qur'an metonymically in the sense of one's whole being" ^[20]

11. *Balagha ma-alsai* (Qur'an 37:102) Literally means, attained (the age of) striving or walking. It is a metonym for the child's attaining to an age when he understands, and shares in, his father's faith and aims.

12. *Zul autad* (Qur'an 38:12)

In classical Arabic this phrase was used as a metonym for 'mightly domain' or firmness of power. "The number of poles supporting a Bedouin tent is determined by its size, and the latter has always depended on the status and power of its owner; thus, a mighty chieftain is often alluded to as 'he of many tent-poles'".^[21]

13. '*Bima kasabat aidikum*' (Qur'an 42:30)

This is an oft recurring metonym for man's doings and conscious attitudes in this world, meant to bring out the fact that these doings and attitudes are the 'harvest' of a person's spiritual character and have, therefore, a definite influence on the quality of his life in the hereafter. The nature of (the life in the hereafter) depends on, and is a result of, what one has previously earned.

14. '*Akhizu bi nasiyatiha*' (Qur'an 11:56) and *nasiyati* (Qur'an 96:15,16)

This expression is a metonym denoting a person's utter subjection and humiliation. When describing a person's humility and subjection to another person, the ancient Arabs used to say 'the forelock of so and so is in the hands of so and so.'

10. Interrogation

Interrogation as a figure of speech is the asking of a question, not for the sake of getting an answer, but to put a point more effectively.

This figure of speech is also known as 'rhetorical question' because a question is asked merely for the sake of rhetorical effect.

The Qur'an has frequently used this figure of speech in the most effective manner:

In some *ayaat*, the Qur'an has asserted that interrogation is used in it. Thus, the effectiveness of interrogation is stressed in the *ayaat* itself. In these *ayaat*, the Qur'an

has both the question and the obvious answer.

1. "If you ask them, (those who join partners with Allah) 'who is it that has created the heavens and the earth?' They would surely answer: 'Allah'...." (Qur'an 39:38)
2. "If you ask them, 'who created the heavens and the earth, and subdued the sun and the moon?' they will answer: 'Allah'..." (Qur'an 29:61)
3. "If you ask them, 'who sends down water from the sky to revive the dead land?' They will answer: 'Allah.'..." (Qur'an 29:63)

In the *ayaat* of the Qur'an (27:59-64), a series of questions is posed. Along with other questions, one question: 'is there a god besides Allah?' is repeated five times to make the interrogation more forceful. The rhetorical effect is produced by the interrogation as well as by the repetition of the question.

In case of some interrogations of the Qur'an, the answers are obvious, by universal consent, observation or by historical evidence, such as:

A. Universal consent

* "Is not Allah the most equitable of all Judges?" (Qur'an 19:08)

* "...who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave?..." (Qur'an 02:255)

B. Observation

"Do they not look at the clouds how they are created? And at the sky how it is raised high? And at the mountains, how they are fixed firm, And at the earth, how it is outspread?" (Qur'an 88:17-20).

C. Historical Evidence

"Have you not observed how your Lord dealt with the followers of the elephant?" (Qur'an 105:01)

"Did We not destroy (so many of) those (sinners) of olden days?" (Qur'an 77:16)

"Are you not aware of how your Sustainer has dealt with (the tribe of) 'Ad? The people of lofty pillars, the like of whom has never been erected before in all the cities? And with (the tribe of) Thamud, who hewed rocks out of the valley? And with Fir'awn of the (many) tent poles?"

(Qur'an 89:6-10)

1. Some interrogations however are suggestive

The Qur'an makes the addressees to ponder and arrive at the answer themselves. By adopting this method, the answer which emerges in the minds of the addressees will have a deeper and more lasting effect. For example:

"O man! What has deceived you respecting your Lord?" (Qur'an 82: 6)

"Did you then think that We created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us (for account)?" (Qur'an 23:115)

2. The Qur'an has also used this figure of speech to create feelings of astonishment or surprise.

"..How is it that I do not see Hud-Hud? or could he be among the absent?" (Qur'an 27:20)

"Yet, they say: 'What sort of apostle is this (man) who eats food (like all other mortals) and goes about in the market-places?' Why has not an Angel (visibly) been sent down unto him to act as a warner together with him." (Qur'an 25:07)

3. To induce or to allure

"O you who have attained faith! Shall I point out to you a bargain that will save you from grievous suffering (in this world and in the life to come)?" (Qur'an 61:10)

4. To convey the sense of degradation

"Hence, whenever they consider you, (O Mohammed) they but make you a target of their mockery, (saying) 'is this the one whom Allah has sent as an apostle?' (Qur'an 25:41)

In some *ayaat*, both the interrogation and the answer are provided in the Qur'an. Thus, the idea is fully conveyed.

"And O! Allah said 'Jesus, Son of Mary! Did you say unto men: worship me and my mother as deities besides Allah?'. Jesus answered: 'Limitless art Thou, in Thy glory! It would not be possible for me to say what I have no right to (say).'" (Qur'an 05:116)

11. Exclamation

In this figure of speech, the exclamatory form is used to draw greater attention to a point than a mere bald statement of it could do.

Exclamation or interjection “is a natural ejaculation expressing emotion, viewed as a part of speech.”¹

The Qur’an has frequently used exclamatory form to stress its point. It has addressed Muslims as “O ye who believe!”. Not less than 89 *ayaat* in the Qur’an start with such an exclamation.

Humans have been addressed in 20 *ayaat* of the Qur’an as ‘*Ya ayyuhan nas*’ (O man!). Human beings have also been addressed as ‘*ya bani Adam*’ four times in the Qur’an. The Prophet has been addressed as ‘*Ya ayyuhan Nabi*’ in 12 *ayaat*, as ‘*Ya ayyuhal Rasool*’ in two *ayaat*, and once as ‘*Ya ayyuhal Muzzamil*’ and ‘*Ya ayyuhal Mudaththir*’ respectively.

The wives of the Prophet have been addressed in the following *ayaat*:

“O wives of the Prophet! If any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct, the punishment would be doubled to her, and that is easy for Allah.” (Qur’an 33:30)

“O Wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women.” (Qur’an 33:32)

12. Comparison or Correspondence (*Muqabala*)

Comparison is an act of noting similarities and differences. It consists in a juxtaposition, ie. on the one side a concept (and its corresponding or congruous term) and on the other side the opposite of the first concept.

This figure of speech has the advantage of attracting more attention and when one object is presented as a foil to the other, or contrasted, the characteristics of each object are understood with greater clarity.

This figurative method has the advantage of attracting more attention and when one object is presented as a foil to the other, (or contrasted), the characteristics of each object are understood with greater clarity.

Some of the examples of the ‘comparison and correspondence’ in the Qur’an are as follows:

1. “(Allah) causes the night to interpenetrate the day and the day to interpenetrate the night.” (Qur’an 22: 61)
2. “You would have thought them awake, while they were asleep.” (Qur’an 18:18)
3. “He did not believe i.e. did not accept the truth (*saddaqa*) nor did he pray (*salla*). But he belied (rejected the truth-*kazzaba*) and disobeyed (*tawwala*).” (75:31-32)

In the above two *ayaat*, (75:31 and 32), ‘*kazzaba*’, corresponds to ‘*saddaqa*’ and

'*taawwala*' corresponds to '*salla*'.

13. Antithesis

Antithesis is "a figure of speech in which contrary ideas are expressed in a balanced sentence. The second part of 'man proposes God disposes' is antithetically parallel to the first part."¹

Following are examples of 'antithesis':

1. To err is human, to forgive Divine (Alexander Pope).
2. Where wealth accumulates, and men decay. (Oliver Goldsmith)

Most of the experts agree that antithesis means the mention of a thing and its opposite like night and day, vice and virtue etc.

In 'antithesis' a striking opposition or contrast of words or sentiments is made in the same sentence. It is employed to secure emphasis.

It is a 'contrast or opposition, either rhetorical or philosophical, in rhetoric, any disposition of words that serves to emphasize a contrast or opposition of ideas, usually by the balancing of connected clause with parallel grammatical constructions is called antithesis'.¹

One of the literary features of the Qur'an is the exposition of the meaning of words and terms by an antithetical method; for example, "day and night" etc. One of the principles to be followed for the understanding of the Qur'an is to bear in mind the antithetical epithets used in it.

Following are some of the examples of antithesis used in the Qur'an:

1. "Surely, We created man of the best stature (*ahsani taqwim*) then We reduced him to the lowest of the low. (*asfala safilin*)" (95:4 and 5)

The lowest of the low (*asfala safilin*) is used as an antithesis to best conformation or best stature (*ahsani taqwim*).

2. "In retaliation is life for you" (Qur'an 2:178)
3. "The blind and the seeing are not alike; nor the depths of darkness and the light; nor are the cool shade and heat of the sun; nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead.-----" (Qur'an 35:19-22)

Antithesis as a figure of speech is used in 'epigram' which can be termed as a brief pointed saying or a witty condensed expression which excite surprise and arrest attention.

14. Pun

Pun is “ a play on words; the humorous use of a word emphasizing different meaning or applications.”^[22]

A pun consists in the “ use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings, or the use of two or more words of the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect.”^[23]

“It is an expression that achieves emphasis or humour by contributing an ambiguity, two distinct meaning being suggested either by the same word or two similar sounding words,”^[24]

Pun consists in presenting two homogeneous words which conform in etymology and word pattern (ie. in the composition of their letters)

Specimens of pun from the Qur'an are:

1. “They keep others (*yanhauna*) from it (ie. the Qur'an) and withdraw (*yan'auna*) from it (themselves);-----” (Qur'an 6:26)
2. “They who believe (*aamanu*) and have not tarnished their belief (*Imanahum*) with wrong, for them is peace (*aman*)......” (Qur'an 6:82)
3. “How great is my grief (*yasafa*) for Yusuf.....” (Qur'an 12:84)
4. “Man is made hasty (in disposition) (*ajalin*). Soon shall I make manifest to you My signs. Do not, then, ask Me to hasten it (*fala tasta'jilun*)” (Qur'an 21:37)
5. “-----I do now submit (*aslamtu*) with *Suleyman* to the Lord of all domains of existence”. (Qur'an 27:44)
6. “ So set (*fa'qum*) your face to the Right Way (*Deen-al qayyam*) before there come from Allah the Day which there is no chance of averting.....” (Qur'an 30:43)
7. “ And verily We sent among them warners (*munzirin*). Then see what was the end of those who were warned (*al-munzarin*). “ (37:72 and 73)
8. “Say: It is Allah whom I will serve (*a'budu*) with sincere devotion; and (as for you) you may serve (*fa'budu*) whom you like beside Him.....” (Qur'an 39:14 and 15)
9. “ That was because you were wont to rejoice (*tafrahun*) on the earth in things other than the truth and that you were wont to be insolent (*tamrahun*).” (Qur'an 40:75)

10. "Woe to every (kind of) slanderer (*humazatin*) and defamer (*lumazatin*)." (Qur'an 104:1)

15. Irony

Irony is a mode of speech in which the real meaning is exactly the opposite of that which is literally conveyed.

It is "a figure of speech in which the literal (denotative) meaning of a word or statement is the opposite of that intended. In literature, irony is a technique of indicating an intention or attitude opposite to what is actually stated"¹

Humor starts with the perception of some inconsistency strong enough to provoke tension. Sudden release from such tension results in a smile.

The Qur'an has used this figure of speech also. Some of the examples of 'irony' in the Qur'an are as follows:

1. "(O Prophet!) to the hypocrites give the glad tidings (*bashshiril*) that there is for them (but) a grievous penalty". (Qur'an 4:138)

The announcement of 'grievous penalty' is certainly not 'glad tidings'. Here the meaning of the words 'glad tidings' are exactly opposite of the intended meanings.

2. "If you could but see when they (who rejected faith) shall be confronted with their Lord (on the Day of judgment) and He will say to them: 'Is not this (the life of the Hereafter) a reality? They will say: 'Yes, by our Lord it is.' He will say: 'Relish you then (*fazuqu*) the penalty, for having denied it.' " (Qur'an 6:30)
3. "We will certainly give unbelievers a taste (*falanuziqanna*) of a severe penalty, and will requite them for the worst of what they used to do." (Qur'an 41:27)
4. " (A voice will cry): 'seize him and drag him into mid-hell, then pour over his head, to add to his torment boiling water (and it will be said to the sinner)': 'relish it (*zuq*) truly were you mighty full of power'" (Qur'an 44:47-49)

Here the words 'relish it' and 'you were mighty, full of power', are exactly opposite of the real and the intended meanings.

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CHAPTER - 3

TERMS OF THE QUR'AN

What is a term?

“If a word is used in a special sense and if it pertains to any discipline it is called a term.

When a science, philosophy or thought is developed or when new ideas for social reforms are introduced, the ordinary words prevalent are not sufficient and capable to express the specifically developing units of thought of that particular discipline. As such either new words are coined or the ordinary words are chosen and special meanings are assigned to them. In other words a new status is given to the ordinary words of the language. When a word becomes a term it loses its original dictionary meaning and assumes a new meaning and a new status. Terms are in reality hints which turn the mind towards the cluster (group) of thoughts and ideas they contain.

Thus a term, as distinct from a word, is an expression that has a precise meaning in some uses. It is peculiar to a particular science or discipline. It conveys a full thought. Term is the basis on which exchange of thought is possible. ‘If you wish to converse with me’, said Voltair, ‘define your terms’.

Just as letters are necessary for words, and words are required to make up sentences, in the same manner terms are inevitable for any discipline. For every art or discipline, for every philosophy or ideology; there are particular terms through which the meaning and connotations are explained and elucidated.”¹

Qur'anic terms

“As mentioned above a major problem with every new revolutionary movement is its nomenclature. The Qur'an is not only a representative book of dynamic movement, but it is preeminently '*al hikmat*', a Book of Wisdom. As in the case of any discipline, the Qur'an also has its own systems of terms. There are many words which have been used in some special sense quite different from their ordinary connotation; such as '*Iman*', '*ilaah*', '*Deen*', etc. Each term encompasses a whole concept. It is imperative to know these terms to grasp the spirit of the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, not less than 37 terms have been used. In a religion that sparkled new ideas and new concepts in a short span of time such as Islam, terms --- which have universal as well as eternal significance played an important role. The new dynamic religion was taught through the Qur'an, which has its own unique language and terminology. The terms of the Qur'an, in the first place have been picked up from the prevalent or current vocabulary and then special meanings have been assigned or designated to them”² “There is a repertory of familiar themes running through the whole Koran;

each *Surah* elaborates or adumbrates one or more --- often many --- of these”.³ “These Qur’anic themes or concepts expressed through Qur’anic terms were the force that have shaped the minds of the early converts, and these very concepts are still capable to shape the minds of Muslims of today and tomorrow until posterity, if the Qur’anic terminology, is fully and correctly comprehended. Any serious reader of the Qur’an should be prepared to absorb as readily as possible a whole range of new concepts and terms. Without the full grasp of the terminology of the Qur’an, all efforts to understand Islam will be futile. One cannot expect to profit seriously from the Qur’anic teachings. The thought of the Qur’an cannot be deeply shared without getting acquainted with ideas of which there is no exact equivalent, in any language.

In order to understand the Qur’an, a clear comprehension of the full connotation of these terms is a *sine qua non*. These terms are fully explained by the Qur’an, itself. The Prophet of Islam also explained these terms to his followers but in later centuries mostly due to the influences of alien civilizations and of Sufism, their meaning mostly slipped away from the Muslim mind and changes crept in. Thus every term was expanded in its connotation and became elastic to accommodate new trends of thought relating to that term. For example, the term ‘*al-ihsaan*’ assumed wider range of meaning in post-Qur’anic sufi literature. So much so that today it becomes rather difficult to sift Qur’anic meaning from the jargon collected around these lofty concepts.

It is necessary to take deliberate and effective steps to understand the meanings of the Qur’anic terms, which are well preserved in the Qur’an”.¹

The exercise of seeking different interpretations of the Qur’anic terms is futile as the Qur’an itself gives the correct interpretations of the terms. It never tires of playing upon the terms by repetition, expansion, variation or clarification. The fact that the Qur’an deliberately explains its terms by their frequent uses is very obvious. The roots of some Qur’anic terms such as ‘*nafakha*’, ‘*ghafara*’, ‘*shakara*’, ‘*kafara*’ & ‘*salawa*’ etc. are used three or even four times in a single *ayah* respectively. The term ‘*taqwa*’ and the derivatives for example, have been used in the Qur’an not less than 258 times. When such is the case it is rather unfortunate that the Qur’anic terms have received from various translators a rather uncharitable treatment, at time variant with the Qur’anic concept. It is immaterial if every one of them is partly correct. The terms used in the Qur’an are so comprehensive and full of meaning that they defy any exact translation or definition.

It is absolutely necessary to identify ‘terms’ and to differentiate them from words. It may be improper --- and at time dangerous --- to treat ordinary words of the Qur’an as ‘terms’ and vice-versa. ‘*Imam*’ for example is used in the Qur’an as a word. By treating it as a term immeasurable confusion has been created. Similarly if the Qur’anic terms, ‘*salaat*’, ‘*kufir*’ etc., are treated as words the entire purpose of the message will be defeated.

A selection of 37 terms of the Qur'an with explanatory notes is presented here.

List of The Terms

1. *Al-Aakhirah*

Al-aakhirah is hereafter. Belief in life after death in one form or another is common to almost all religions of the world. It is also one of the basic articles of faith (*Iman*) of Islam. In other words, it is one of the fundamental beliefs of Islam. Without having a belief in the day of judgment and in individual resurrection one cannot be a Muslim.

The Qur'an contains innumerable *ayaat* on *al-aakhirah*. In Islam, the human activity is judged according to the intention. Personal and immediate gain is regarded as the worldly gain. The collective gain and the deferred gain is called the gain of '*aakhirah*'. *Aakhirah* applies to the next stage of life mostly after death. The idea of '*aakhirah*' shows that there is accountability for the human beings. There are moral laws just as there are physical laws. According to these laws good or bad deeds have their own consequences. According to the Qur'an, there is a reward for every human action. If the deed is good, the result will be good, and vice versa. The activities of the adherents are controlled by this great concept. What shape the good or bad deeds will take cannot be determined by human reason.

Al-qiyamah in the Qur'an refers to the day of resurrection. It is also considered as a day of judgment. *Al-ma'd* (i.e., the returning) is the return of life after death.

'*Yaumal-Deen*' or '*yaumal aakhirah*' is another name for the day of judgment.

The notes of warning in the Qur'an against sinful life and the description of the consequences to follow which form part of the *Kitab* have '*hikmah*' attached to them. The question whether the picture of the life after death which is generally accepted by the majority of Muslim is really based on the Qur'an is a crucial one. According to Dr. Syed Abdul Latif: "The description of the life to follow given in the stories which have found their way into the *Hadith* literature and which have exercised a fascination for the mediaeval mind among Muslims has, except in a few cases, no parallel in the Qur'an".¹

The question whether it is incumbent on a Muslim to believe the commonly accepted 'description' of the life after death, or whether a Muslim is free to form his own opinion and to subscribe to a view different from the accepted one but fully based on the Qur'an is also a crucial one.

As far as the concept of 'agonies of grave' is concerned, according to

some scholars, there is no support to it from the Qur'an. All the dead will be brought back to life on the doomsday. The concept of 'agonies of the grave' presupposes that the buried person will be brought back to life in the grave itself which is against the concept of '*yaumul-qiyamah*'.

The concept of 'agonies of the grave' is based on the sayings of the Prophet the authenticity of which is questioned by some Muslim scholars according to the principles of '*riwayat* and '*dirayat*'.

According to the Qur'an '*akhirah*' is a certainty beyond doubt.

The Qur'an however, refers to the nature of the other worldly life as a thing which no human being can imagine (Qur'an 32:17)

Questions connected with life after death are, therefore of an intricate nature, in as much as they are not things that can be perceived by the senses.

2. Ilaah

The literal meaning of '*ilaah*' is Divinity. The connotation of the word '*ilaah*' includes the capacities to fulfill the needs of others, to give them shelter and protection, to relieve their minds of distress and agitation, superiority and the requisite authority and power to do all deeds.

Ilaah is the being which is beloved, gives peace of mind, which according to the devotee is elevated and exalted, which guards and protects when one is in fear and worry. The being which according to man's belief provides gains and losses, answers prayers and has power over our existence, is '*ilaah*'. Man in his ignorance selects the '*ilaah*' of his own choice, but there is no '*ilaah*' except Allah. According to the Qur'an, Allah alone is the '*ilaah*'. The declaration that there is no '*ilaah*' except Allah is the article of faith. It shows the importance of assigning all the attributes of '*ilaah*' exclusively to Allah. It is a declaration that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah.

The golden calf which was worshipped by Israelites in the absence of Prophet Musa is referred to as '*ilaah*' in the Qur'an:

"Then He (*Sameri*) produced the image of a calf which mooed like a cow and they said: 'this is your god (*ilaah*) and the god (*ilaah*) of Prophet Musa (whom) he (prophet Musa) has neglected' ". (Qur'an 20:88)

For the non believers who have objects of worship according to their own choice every object so worshipped is '*ilaah*'. They do not differentiate between Allah and '*ilaah*'. When Firaun talks about Allah, the mention in the Qur'an is Musa's '*ilaah*':

"Firaun said 'O Haman build me a lofty tower that I may perhaps find

the means of reaching the tracts of heaven and look at the god (*ilaah*) of Musa.'” (Qur'an 40:36&37)

Calls to '*ilaahs*' are based on hope and fear. *Mushrikeen* i.e. those persons who call deities or saints as '*ilaah*' believe that the deities or saints enjoyed some share in the divinity of Allah, that their word carried some weight with Him and that their recommendation (*shifa't*) could result in some gains. *Mushrikeen* also believe that if the *ilaahs* (deities or saints) are offended it would result in great harm and calamity.

Men at times make their own selfish desire as their '*ilaah*':

“Have you ever considered (*the kind of man*) who makes his own desires his deity (*ilaah*)” (Qur'an 25:43)

The very existence of deities other than Allah presupposes confusion in the universe:

“Never did Allah take into Himself any offspring, nor has there ever been any deity (*ilaahin*) side by side with Him: (for, had there been any,) lo! each deity (*ilaahin*) would surely have stood apart (from the others) in whatever it had created, and they would surely have (tried to) overcome one another” (Qur'an 23: 91)

The very fact that only one Law prevails in the entire universe is a conclusive proof that there is no deity (*ilaah*) other than Allah.

The Qur'an exhorts men to observe for themselves the different phenomenon in nature (Qur'an 27: 60 to 64) and questions:

“..... could there be any god (*ilaah*) along with Allah ? Say: '(If you think so,) produce your evidence if you are truthful' ". (Qur'an 27: 64)

3. *Iman*

Iman means steadfast, firm and implicit belief. *Iman* is to verify something, to be convinced, to accept and to have full confidence in it. It is credence, fidelity, or loyalty, to a way of life after mature judgment. The term *Iman*, is usually rendered into English as belief or faith; and faith in turn signifies acceptance without any notional proof or argument, or without reference to reason. Faith is generally regarded as the negation of knowledge or reason. The Qur'anic term *Iman*, is not belief in the above sense. According to the Qur'an, '*Iman*', is a conviction based upon reason and knowledge. A belief, which is void of reason and involves blind acceptance is not '*Iman*', according to the Qur'an. It is true that *Din* involves the acceptance of certain things which cannot be known through sense perception; but there is no reason to presume that things which cannot be thus perceived do not exist. Indeed, our reason and thinking compel us to recognize the existence of many such

things. *Iman* signifies the conviction that results from intellectual satisfaction.

Iman is a state of happiness acquired by virtue of positive actions and constructive concepts as well as dynamic and effective measures. Deep conviction brings inner peace and satisfaction.

A *momin* according to the Qur'an is one who acquires inner contentment and safeguards the peace and security of other human beings.

The Qur'an regards the material and sensual life (like that of the animals) as the way of '*Kufr*'. The other and higher plane of life is not regarded as the higher form of animal life, but is regarded as the imitation of divine attributes. To have '*Iman*' in Allah implies the acceptance of this higher plane of life. Awareness of wrong and justice is an important ingredient of '*Iman*'. The Prophet of Islam said "If any impropriety or injustice is committed in your presence, remedy it with your hand. If it is not possible (due to strong opposition etc.) prevent it with your tongue. If even that is not possible, realize in your mind that it is wrong. For that is the last stage of *Iman*".

4. *Ayah*

Ayah (Plural *ayaat*) literally means a sign, portent, token or miracle. Every portion of Divine revelation is a message or a sign of Allah's wisdom and benevolence, just as much as Allah's material creation, (or even His dealings in history) are signs for us, if only we understand them. "Although the term '*ayah*' is most frequently used in the Qur'an in the sense of 'Divine message', we must remember that, primarily, it denotes a sign (or token) by which a thing is known (*Qamus*). As defined by Imam Raghīb Isfahani, it signifies any perceivable phenomenon (irrespective of whether it is apparent to the senses or only to the intellect) connected with a thing that is not by itself, similarly perceivable: in brief a 'symbol'".¹ Allah communicates with men through verbal signs (messages), revelation or '*wahi*' which is revealed through His chosen messengers. He also communicates with men through natural signs which are spread throughout the universe. Allah continuously reveals His power (*qudrat*) through natural phenomenon which are signs (*ayaat*) of different aspects of His nature in the physical universe: His power is also expressed through a different phenomenon such as compassion, justice etc. Percepts and rules as prescribed by Him are expressed both through physical law which is prevalent in nature, as well as through social or moral law. These natural '*ayaat*' (signs) are directly available to all men without any intermediary.

The verbal signs (messages) are *ayaat* of the Book of Allah which are available to men only through intermediaries i.e., prophets of Allah. Since the Qur'an is a Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (S) through wahi segments of the Qur'an are called '*ayaat*'. There is complete uniformity between the signs (*ayaat*) of Allah spread all over the universe and the signs (*ayaat*) of

Allah in His Book.

The term *ayah* applies to the smaller portion, division or sentence of the Qur'an which is generally but loosely, rendered into English as *ayah*. *Ayah* is the true unit of the Qur'an. Some '*ayaat*' are long and some are short. The end of each *ayah* is determined by the position of a small circle such as " O". This circle is a punctuation mark. All the 114 *Surahs* of the Qur'an and all the '*ayaat*' in every *Surah* were arranged and committed to writing during the life-time of the Prophet under his personal directions. The arrangement of the *ayaat* is not arbitrary or haphazard as often suggested by some orientalists. Close study reveals a unique and aesthetic sequence. There is complete unanimity among Muslim scholars regarding the sequence of the text of the Qur'an. There was however, no unanimity among the early scholars as to the position of these punctuation marks. The number of division of the Qur'an therefore, differs in the following five editions:¹

1. **Kufah.** The Muslims of Kufah were followers of Ali, son of Abu Talib. Their way of reckoning is generally adopted in India. They reckon 6236 *ayaat*.
2. **Basrah.** The Muslims of Basrah follow the order of Asim son of *Hajjaj*, one of the earliest converts of Islam. According to this arrangement there are 6216 *ayaat*.
3. **Sham.** The Muslims of Sham (Syria) followed Abdullah son of Umar, one of the earliest converts. They reckon 6250 *ayaat*.
4. **Makkah.** According to this arrangement there are 6212 *ayaat*.
5. **Medina.** This way of reading contains 6214 *ayaat*.

The variation in the number of '*ayaat*' is due to several factors. In each of the above variations, the usual formula of initiation: *Bismilla-hir-Rahman nir-Rahim*, which occurs not less than 113 times in the Qur'an, is not reckoned.

Miracles are also termed as '*ayaat*' in the Qur'an. Earlier Prophets were sent with '*ayaat*' to enable them to convince their people.

The Qur'an however, denies miracles in connections with the Prophet of Islam, yet emphasizes that the Qur'an is peer-less and matchless. The Qur'an is thus, regarded as a miracle (*ayah*) of the Prophet of Islam. Every segment of the Qur'an is a miracle or sign (*ayah*) of Allah.

The spirit of enquiry as suggested by Islam treats the whole universe as the subject of observation and knowledge. It suggests the method of experiment through observation for understanding the facts. According to Islamic

prescription, the study of nature is very important for the progress of mankind.

The latter *ayaat* are different phenomena of nature such as:

Creation of the heaven and the earth, variation in languages and the differences in colour of human races etc. (Qur'an 30:22)

Some of the latter *ayaat* (signs) are still of a different nature, such as the ruins of the past, which tell the story of those who once lived in the land.

The Qur'an claims that it contains the same message which was conveyed to earlier Prophets. Addressing the Prophet Muhammad (S), the Qur'an says:

"Nothing is said to you which had not been said to other messengers before you -----." (Qur'an 41:43)

In other words, the messages (*ayaat*) of the Qur'an are similar to the messages of the earlier Divine revelations. This is further clarified when the Qur'an calls the Qur'anic *ayaat* as '*ayaat mutashabihaat*' (messages which are similar to the earlier messages). (Qur'an 3:7)

5. *Tilawah*

This term is derived from the root, '*tala*' meaning to follow step by step. *Tilawah* is a term exclusively used in the Qur'an for the understanding of the Qur'an and its design. In general usage '*tilawah*' is used for recitation of the Qur'an. As the lips move in the recitation of the Qur'anic *ayaat*, the mind has to ponder over the meaning as if pursuing the text step by step. Says the Qur'an:

"Those to whom We have given the (divine) message follow it as it ought to be followed: They are the ones who believe therein; Those who reject faith therein, the loss is their own". (Qur'an 2:121)

'As it ought to be followed' is full of meaning. Mere verbal recitation without pondering over the meaning of the text is not favoured by the Qur'an. The *tilawah* should be with a reverent spirit, with open and un-biased mind.

6. *Tawbah*

Tawbah literally means to turn. A person takes a wrong path, and after a short while realizes his mistake, he turns back and returns to the point where he took the wrong step. This kind of return is called '*tawbah*'.

As a Qur'anic term '*tawbah*' means realization of faults and repentance.

For genuine repentance three ingredients are required:-

- a) The sinner must admit and acknowledge his or her mistake.
- b) He or she must give it up.
- c) He or she must resolve to eschew it for the future.

Human nature being weak, one may have to return to Allah again, and again for mercy. So long as it is done with sincerity, Allah, being most merciful, will forgive.

Sincere and true repentance is called '*tawbantān nusuḥ*' in the Qur'an (Qur'an 66:8).

It should be noted that in the above quoted *ayah*, the people who have attained to faith, have been addressed. This makes it clear that no human being, however imbued with faith, can ever remain entirely free from faults and temptations.

One of the attributes of Allah is that He is *At-tawwāb* (relenting). With reference to man '*tawbah*' means repentance, but with reference to Allah, it means 'to relent'.

The Qur'anic law of requital apparently negates the concept of forgiveness. As an exception, however, Allah is all-powerful to forgive. The meaning of '*maghfirah*' is not forgiveness as generally understood, but protection. Requesting Allah to guard from evil, and to give sufficient strength to resist the destructive forces, is called '*isteghfār*'. The difference between '*tawbah*' and '*isteghfār*' is, that '*tawbah*' is repentance for the past evils and a determination not to repeat the same mistake again. '*Isteghfār*' on the other hand, is to pray for prevention of possible sins and shortcomings in future.

In each of the following three *ayaat* the root '*taba*' with all its derivatives is used thrice:

(1) "Verily, Allah's acceptance of repentance (*al-tawbah*) relates only to those who do evil out of ignorance (*yatubuu*) and then repent (*yatub*) before their time runs out: and it is they to whom Allah will turn again in His mercy - for Allah is all-knowing, wise." (Qur'an 4:17)

(2) " and their should had become (utterly) constricted ----- they came to know with certainty that there is no refuge from Allah other than (a return) unto Him; and thereupon He turned (*taba*) again unto them in His mercy, so that they might repent (*litubu*): for, verily, Allah alone is an acceptor

of repentance (*Al-tawwab*), a dispenser of grace.” (Qur’an 9:118)

(3) “And seeing that he who repents (*taba*) and (thenceforth) does what is right truly turned (*yatubu*) to Allah by (this very act of) repentance (*matab*)”. (25-71)

7. *Thawaab, Adhaab*

The word ‘*thawaab*’ is derived from the root ‘*thawaba*’ , meaning to return. As a term ‘*thawaab*’ means recompense or reward promised by Allah for the good deeds, performed by man. There are certain conditions for getting the reward

- a) The deed to be performed should be as ordained by Allah, and as prescribed by the Prophet.
- b) It should be performed with the sole purpose of pleasing Allah.
- c) It should be free from personal and selfish motives such as, gaining popularity, material benefits etc.
- d) If the deed is being performed with the use of wealth (i.e., charity etc.) such wealth should be the acquisition through fair and permitted means.

Even if one of the above conditions is not fulfilled, there will be no reward from Allah. The ‘*thawaab*’ has the same significance in the hereafter as the wealth and other material acquisitions have in this life. The benefits in the life of ‘*aakhirat*’ (hereafter) depends on the ‘*thawaab*’, which is earned by an individual during the worldly life. Allah promises in the Qur’an that .

“ I shall not waste the good deeds of any of you, be he a male or a female. You are members, one of another I shall blot out their sins and admit them into paradise with rippling streams ----- as a recompense from Allah ----- and the best of rewards is with Allah” (Qur’an 3:195)

‘*Adhaab*’ is derived from the root ‘*adhaba*’ meaning to abstain from eating and sleeping (due to extreme thirst).¹ As a term ‘*adhaab*’ means Divine wrath, punishment, penalty, agony, anguish, disturbed state of society and of mind of the individual.

‘*Adhaab*’ is opposite of ‘*thawaab*’. The Qur’an enjoins the right and forbids the wrong. If this call is not heeded, the inevitable result will be ‘*adhaab*’.

The Divine wrath can take various forms. It can be in the shape of material destruction or mental deficiencies. Five different kinds of ‘*adhaab*’ are

mentioned in a single *ayah*:

“And we sent upon them the flood (*tuufaan*) the locusts (*jaraad*) lice (*quummal*) frogs (*zafaadi’a*) and blood (*dam*) ----- clear signs (of warning) but they perished in the arrogance and (since) they were a sinful people”. (Qur’an 7:133)

‘*Aadhaab*’ may strike individual as well as a whole society. The evil deeds which are the result of rejection of eternal truths and the Laws of Allah, the rebellion against Allah and the opposition of the Prophetic mission result in manifold punishment from Allah.

The root ‘*adhaba*’ with different derivatives is used thrice in each of the following *ayaat*:

“Allah said, verily, I will send it (*mai’da*) down to you, but whom so of you will commit infidelity, then I shall torment (‘*u’adhibu*’) him with a torment (*adhaab*) wherewith I have not tormented (‘*yu’adhibu*’) anyone in the entire universe.” (Qur’an 5:115)

“Said he, (*Zil-Qarnayn*) ‘As for him who does wrong (unto others) we shall punish (*nu’adhibu*) and thereupon he shall be referred to his Lord, He will chastise (*yu’adhibu*) him with a grievous chastisement (*adh-aaban*)’ ”. (Qur’an 18:87)

8. *Jannah* and *Nar*

Al-Jannah, according to the Qur’an, means a garden. In the Qur’an it refers to the celestial bliss or Paradise. It will be given as a reward to men who have performed good deeds in their life. According to the Qur’an those persons who accept faith and do good deeds are the people of paradise. The well being and enjoyments of heavenly life are reserved for those people. The plural of the word is *Al-Jannaat*. The word *Al-Jannah* is used several times in the Qur’an. Those who believe and work in righteousness, their portion is the Garden (Qur’an 2:25)

Al-Nar literally means ‘the fire’. The word occurs in the Qur’an very frequently for Hell:

“Fear the fire whose fuel is men and idols (carved out of stones) ” (Qur’an 2:24).

According to the Qur’an men who have committed sins in the world will be consigned to ‘fire’ as a punishment.

According to some scholars, reference to the ‘Garden’ and ‘the Fire’ is figurative. The Garden is the symbol of felicity and Fire is the symbol of

punishment.

Says Dr. Mohammed Iqbal:

“Heaven and Hell are states, not localities . . . Hell, therefore, as conceived by the Qur'an, is not a pit of everlasting torture inflicted by a revengeful God; it is a corrective experience which may make a hardened ego once more sensitive to the living breeze of Divine grace. Nor is Heaven a holiday. Life is one and continuous”.¹

This view is supported by the Qur'an:

“No one is there of you who shall avoid passing through it (Hell) . . .” (Qur'an 19:71).

Some exegetes interpret this *ayah* by saying that there is a bridge to Heaven called '*siraat*', which passes over Hell. There is no such mention of this bridge in the Qur'an. “In *ayah* 19:71 the idea is to let the inmates of Hell pass into heaven after they have gone through a process of purification”.²

Both the Garden and the Fire are unquestionable realities, which every human being will have to face one day. The only difficulty is that, during our lifetime, due to our biological limitations, we cannot comprehend the actual nature of the Garden and the Fire. It is the beauty and the '*hikmah*' of the Qur'an that these realities have been explained in human language, which create in man a temptation to achieve the Garden and a sense of horror to avoid the Fire.

9. *Jaza, Ajr*

'*Jaza*' means reward, requital or recompense. According to the law of Allah, there is full accountability for every action of an individual or of the community. If the action is good, the result or reward will be good. If the action is bad, it will end in disaster. '*Jaza*', therefore, applies to the reward for good actions, as well as the suffering for bad actions. *Aakhirat* is a continuation of this life. The laws of compensation for good or bad deeds committed during this life, will be governed in this life as well as in the hereafter.

The word '*Ajr*' is derived from the root '*ajara*', which means to give wages. '*Ajr*' is used in the Qur'an as a term meaning the reward for the good deeds as well as punishment for the bad deeds according to the Divine Law. Says the Qur'an:

“And we gave him (Prophet Ibrahim) his reward in this world; and verily, in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous” (Qur'an 29:27).

As a term however '*Ajr*' is used in the Qur'an for the rewards of good

deeds only. The recompense for the bad deeds is not termed as '*Ajr*'. '*Ajr*' is also used in the Qur'an as a word meaning 'wages' in the ordinary sense. Says the Qur'an:

"Said one of the (damsels): 'O my father! Hire him on wages, Verily the best of men for you to employ is the man who is strong and trustworthy' " (Qur'an 28:26).

According to the doctrine of accountability, which Islam strongly stresses as necessary for a responsible person, every individual's actions will be judged with full justice. The Day of Recompense is mentioned in the Qur'an as *YawmidDeen*, *Yawmal Hisab*, etc.

Al-hisab means the account. When used with the word '*yawm*' it means 'Day of Reckoning'.

10. *Jihaad*

Jihaad literally means effort, strife or endeavour. As a term *jihaad* is an all-round struggle in the way of Allah. It is both offensive and defensive. '*jihaad*' is one of the tenets of Islam. It is obligatory for every Muslim to exercise all his powers for the establishment of Islam with all its advantages, and for the eradication of evils which are the results of man-made religions.

The establishment of Islam signifies the formation of a healthy society in which the Divine Law prevails. In other words, '*jihaad*', is a struggle to make Allah's word supreme in the world. It involves facing all the hardships and hurdles that come in the way.

To start with, one should fight against his own evil self and overcome his own weaknesses and temptations. Then only one can struggle successfully for the betterment of society. This struggle may also be at the intellectual and physical plane or by the use of the gift of speech etc. This struggle demands sacrifice at every level. If there is opposition in the way of this struggle, one has to face it. If there is collective and armed opposition, one should be ready to sacrifice everything, even his life, for the sacred cause.

'*Jihaad*' except at the initial stage is a collective struggle and it is incumbent upon Muslims that it should be in an organized manner.

The term '*jihaad*' is often confused with the word '*qital*' (killing and fighting). In the West, '*jihaad*' is generally rendered as 'holy war', a usage the media has popularized. Unfortunately some Muslim writers also translate the term '*jihad*' as 'holy war'. '*jihaad*' and '*qital*' are sometimes loosely used in one and the same sense, whereas, the Qur'an has made a clear distinction between the two. To fight for the cause of truth and thus to endanger one's own life, is the highest form of sacrifice. What more can one offer than one's own precious

life in such a sacred cause! Thus '*jihaad*' against the wanton enemies of Allah with one's own life, is only the last phase of the struggle which a true Muslim carries on for the sake of Allah and for His '*Deen*'.

If non-Muslims are peaceful with the Muslims or even indifferent to Islam, there cannot be any ground or justification to declare war on them. There is no such thing as religious war or to force Islam on non-Muslims, because if Islam does not emerge from deep convictions from within it is not acceptable to Allah, nor can it help those who profess it.

'*Jihaad*' is spending our lives, or the lives of those who are near and dear to us. It may involve the loss of all the fruits of a life-time's labour not only in the shape of material goods, but in some intellectual or moral gain, some position which seemed in our eyes to be eminently desirable in itself, but which we must cheerfully sacrifice, if necessary, for the cause. '*Jihaad*' as a collective struggle with arms and its con-committant supreme sacrifice should be made only under the command of the righteous imam (*Khalifa* or *Ullil-amr*) who can see the entire perspective and judge justly of its necessity. There is no virtue in mere sacrifice of life offered at the whim of an individual. '*Jihaad*' in Islam does not include striving for individual or national power, dominance, glory, wealth, prestige, or pride.

In conclusion, '*jihaad*' as a term is striving in the way of Allah by pen, tongue, hand, media and if inevitable with arms (in a collective organized manner)

11. Hajj

'*Hajj*' is the fifth pillar of Islam. Proceeding to Makkah for performing the traditional pilgrimage, is called '*Hajj*'. *Hajj* is obligatory to every Muslim who is of responsible age, in good health and is financially capable of undertaking the journey. *Hajj* is also obligatory for a Muslim who happens to visit Makkah on the occasion of '*Hajj*'. *Hajj* is obligatory once during a lifetime. The course of '*Hajj*' is another unique characteristic of Islam. "It is the annual congregation of delegates of the Islamic Community where they discuss the problems facing mankind and seek their solution in the light of the Divine Laws. The real purpose of this congregation is the creation of a universal brotherhood of men, which offers the only solution to the present difficulties of mankind".¹

12. Khalifah

'*Khalifah*' is derived from the root '*khalafa*', meaning to leave behind. '*Khilafat*' thus means succession. Literally the leaves of a tree which sprout after falling of the earlier leaves are termed as '*Khalafa*'. Thus the correct meaning of '*Khalafa*' is successor. The declaration of the Qur'an that "man is made *Khilafah* on earth" in (Qur'an 6:165) Qur'an is often interpreted as

meaning that man is made Allah's vicegerent or deputy in this life. This interpretation is perhaps not correct. Man can neither be vicegerent of Allah nor his successor. Allah has not bestowed '*khilafat*' on man in this sense. Allah alone is the supreme power on earth. He alone possesses all authority and has full control over the universe. He alone is the sovereign. He directly rules the universe every moment.

"----- Every day he manifests himself in yet another (wonderous) way" (Qur'an 55:25).

There is nobody else who shares his authority. In the Qur'an '*istakhlaḥ*' means to make one group or nation as successor to another group or nation. In this sense '*Khalifah*' signifies a position of Sovereignty or one who exercises authority, being the successor of the one who earlier exercised it.

The Almighty Allah, through time, immemorial has constantly allowed one specie to succeed another. In the animal kingdom physical strength alone is not sufficient for existence to ensure survival of the particular species. The fitness and competence is the main thing. The species which struggled with the odds of nature with determination and consistency is considered as '*salih*' and '*mustakhliḥ*' on earth. In this way, the Almighty Allah in His grand wisdom has made one species as successor to another. This position is explained in the *lastayah* of *Surah al-Anaam*:

"It is He who made you successors on earth and exalted some of you in rank over others." (Qur'an 6:165)

"He is the one who established you successor on earth." (Qur'an 35:39)

Among human beings, Allah also makes one nation of people the successor of the other:

"My Lord will cause another people to succeed you." (Qur'an 11:57)

"Oh Dawood! We have made you successor (of others) on earth and so judge between men with justice." (Qur'an 38:26)

"Do but remember how We made you successors to the people of Noah and were given a greater increase in your stature." (Qur'an 7:69)

As far as human society is concerned, faith and virtuous deeds are necessary conditions for existence. That society or nation which possesses the above two qualities is '*salih*'. The Qur'an says that Allah has promised to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that He will cause them to be successors on Earth (Qur'an 24:55).

It is also mentioned in the Qur'an:

"We already recorded in *Zaboor* as We do in this message that the Earth will be inherited by the righteous servants" (Qur'an 21:105).

When a particular group loses its fitness and competence Allah removes it from the stage and brings another group which believes (exclusively in Allah) and adopts virtue and, thus, proves its competence. Making one group as a successor of another group only implies that one group is deprived of the authority and another group is vested with authority. The group which inherits the Earth as a successor of the other exercises the rightful supremacy on Earth. The authority is bestowed by Allah among various groups in a most judicious manner.

In the post-Qur'anic literature, the word '*Khilafat*' is used in reference to the great institution which was successor to the Prophet and was performing the responsible duty of being the leader of nations on Earth.

13. *Deen*

Deen is derived from the root '*dain*' meaning to take loan. Literally it means recompense. The Qur'an uses the term '*deen*' as a metaphor: *Deen* applies to a system which is based on the principle of accountability - - a system in which the basic belief is that the righteous people will be rewarded and evil-doers will be punished. In this sense, Allah is regarded as the Master of the Day of recompense (Qur'an 1:3). In the Qur'an the word '*deen*' is also used to can note law (Qur'an 12:76), and true nature (on which man is created), (Qur'an 30:29).

As a term '*deen*' is used in the Qur'an to describe Islam. *Deen* is loosely translated into English as religion, which is not correct. Islam is not a religion in the ordinary sense of the word. The Qur'an has not used the word religion for Islam. The comprehensive system which deals with all the aspects of social life according to the teachings of the Qur'an is called '*deen*'.

This system or '*deen*' which basically is the right one, was often corrupted by persons with evil designs or selfish motives. It was also corrupted due to ignorance. About such corrupted *deen* the Qur'an Says:

"Leave alone those who take their *deen* for a play and sport and whom the life of this world has deceived". Qur'an (6:70)

If in a system the center of fidelity and obedience is Allah, then this '*deen*' will be considered as the right one. If on the contrary, the center is other than Allah, then the '*seen*' will be considered as ill-fashioned or corrupted.

All the Prophets who brought the message of Allah from time to time,

propagated Islam. This common teachings of all the Prophets is '*deen*'. The Qur'an regards Islam as *deen*. According to the Qur'an, the *deen* in the sight of Allah is Islam (Qur'an 3:19). At best the different schools of '*shariat*' can be termed as religion. *Shariat* is the system which is employed to interpret the injunctions of *Deen* in individual and social life. Different interpretations and explanations are offered by different *shariat* scholars. A Muslim can have his own preferences in matters of varying interpretations. He is allowed to do so, but the *deen* will be one. A Muslim is prohibited from dividing or splitting the *deen*.

"(Be not) of those who have created rifts in their *deen* and are divided into sects". (Qur'an 30:32)

The other world religions have lost the Divine message in its original form. They have changed the center of loyalties to beings other than Allah and to systems other than Divine. They have merely retained certain modes of prayer and religious practices in the shape of their religions. The Divine system, which is the original *deen* of Allah is fully preserved in Islam alone. What is required is to demonstrate this *deen* in action.

14. Rububiah

Rububiah is one of the important attributes of Allah. It is derived from the root '*rubb*', meaning 'to bring up.' It has the following connotations.

1. To bring up, rear, foster or nourish (with the affection of parents).
2. To supervise and to carry out development.
3. To occupy a central position.
4. To command.

The above functions are attributed to Allah who is the sustainer of the entire creation and hence in the Qur'an Allah is called '*Rubb*' as one of his attributes. *Rubb* is usually translated in English as 'The Lord' or 'The Sustainer.' The English equivalent hardly conveys the real meaning of the original. *Rubb* means one who enables a thing or person to grow and develop and eventually to realize all its potentialities; and the process by which a person (or object) thus fulfills himself, is called '*rububiah*'.

Allah is a Sustainer of the entire creation. The universe created by Allah is in the process of a systematic divine evolution.

Everything in the universe is created without perfection. It has, however, potentialities of development and growth. It is constantly growing into perfection, according to Allah's Design. Allah is constantly attending to the

needs of the universe and the individual needs of the human beings during their evolution and development. Everything is dependent on '*rububiah*' to enable it to become what it was designed to be. Allah being the '*Rubbil Alamin*' is responsible in developing every object in the universe to its full growth. Man is the only disorderly element in nature. Man is also endowed with immense potentialities. Although he possesses animal instincts, he is endowed with latent potentialities of achieving some of the attributes of Allah. "The Qur'an seeks to establish, in accordance with the Divine Laws, a social order under which the latent potentialities of every individual can be fully realized."¹

If man lives according to the teachings of the Qur'an, he can fully develop his personality on physical, mental and moral planes of being.

Just as a tree from the stage of the seed to the full growth requires constant provision of air, light, manure and water according to the actual need with care and affection, the entire universe and every living and non living being in it also require an orderly plan. Providing such plan is called *Rububiah* and the one who provides such sustenance is called *Rubb*.

15. *Risalah, Nabuwah*

Allah has provided for the development and growth of the universe. Since human beings have been created by Allah, endowed with the faculties of judgment and discretion, He has provided some thing more for them. Man requires guidance to enable him to use his power of discretion judiciously. Allah has, therefore, provided mankind with necessary guidance for its perennial and universal needs. This Divine guidance was conveyed to mankind through selected persons, who were the Messengers of Allah or *Rusul* (plural form of *Rasul*). The office of 'prophet ship' is called '*Risalah*'. '*Risalah*' is, therefore, an eloquent expression of Allah's love and concern for mankind. Allah in his benevolence communicated the guidance in the form of Books to the Prophets, at different places in the world and at different times in history. The function of conveying the good tidings for the righteous and giving warning to the evildoers is called '*nubuwwah*.' The person who secures Divine guidance is called '*Nabi*.' According to the Qur'an, *Nabi* is not a person whose function is merely to prophecy future events. He is a person who can see things from a higher plane than others. According to etymology one of the derivatives is '*nabuwatun*' which means an elevated place.

The duty of *Nabi* does not end with the securing of Divine guidance. After receiving the guidance, in his capacity as a *Rasul*, he has to deliver the message revealed to him by Allah, without the slightest change therein, to his fellow beings. He has to communicate the message not only in words but also in action, i.e., by his own example.

"In the Messenger of Allah, you have indeed a beautiful pattern of

conduct.” (Qur’an 33:21)

The Messenger is expected to read the message to man, to cleanse them and to teach them the book, the wisdom and what they did not know. (Qur’an 2:151)

The Messenger is also expected to convey to the believers that those who do good work will be brought forth from darkness to light. (Qur’an 14:1)

The Messenger is further expected to warn that if law of Allah is not followed the consequence will be untoward and adverse.

Rasul is responsible for setting up a social order also in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Divine message.

According to the Qur’an, the Messengers of Allah have played a role throughout history in communicating the message of Allah and demonstrating the way of life, man is expected to follow.

Risalah implies that man by nature, is reformable and that there is inherent good in him. The purpose of ‘*Risalah*’ is to remind man what he is expected to know, or has the inherent capacity to know. The Divine purpose is to teach him what he does not or cannot know by himself. *Risalah* is to help man to find out the right path.

The reason it was necessary to send the Messengers at different times and to different people, was to bring the human beings back to the ‘Right Path,’ when they strayed.

All the Messengers (only 25 have been mentioned by name in the Qur’an) were chosen by Allah, and were given one and the same message. The source of the message is Allah. The purpose of *Risalah* is to acquaint man with the existence of Allah and His Divine teachings, to establish truth and goodness, and to help man to realize the very purpose of his own creation, and existence. The Divine intention of sending messengers is to guide and help man to lead his life in a purposeful way. Since Allah gave one and the same message to all His Messengers, the teachings of all the Messengers of Allah are identical, constant and complementary. The Muslims believe in all the Messengers of Allah and make no distinction between them.

16. Zakaat

‘*Zakaat*’ is derived from the root ‘*zaka*’, meaning to be pure, or purified, to be clean, to increase. The literal meaning of ‘*zakaat*’ is purification. It is applied to a portion of one’s substance which is spent in a sacred cause in order to purify the rest. As a term ‘*zakaat*’ is the annual amount in cash or kind which is to be paid at a prescribed rate by every well to do Muslim as an obligation. It is

thus 'the purifying dues.'

There is no equivalent in any other language or in the vocabulary of any other religion to this Qur'anic term. 'Zakaat' is not just a form of charity or alms-giving. 'Zakaat' is a compulsory payment. In addition to 'sadaqah' (alms) which itself is a commendable and meritorious act, Islam has founded the institution of 'zakaat'. It is distinct and different from 'sadaqa', which is a voluntary (non obligatory), payment. 'Sadaqah' is formless. It is non-obligatory in the sense that there is no prescribed rate or mode of almsgiving. It cannot be trusted to satisfy the needs of society fully, regularly and permanently. 'Sadaqa' (i.e., charity or alms-giving) has a wider connotation and the term 'zakaat' is covered under 'sadaqaat'.

'Zakaat' is not simply an act of kindness. It is not merely a tax. 'Zakaat' is a combination of all these acts and much more.

'Zakaat' is the third duty imposed on a Muslim. There are several injunctions in the Qur'an for the payment of 'zakaat'. payment of 'zakaat' is made compulsory along with 'salaat' in several *ayaat* in the Qur'an :

"And be steadfast in prayer (*salat*) and pay alms (*zakaat*) and whatever good deed you send forth for your own selves, you shall find it with Allah: behold, Allah sees all that you do". (Qur'an 2: 110)

It is a duty enjoined by Allah along with 'salaat', 'saum', (fasting) and 'Hajj'. It is an obligatory payment incumbent on every Muslim enjoying a certain minimum of property and/or income. Islamic law empowers and obliges the Islamic state to collect the 'zakaat' and to keep it as a distinct head of account, separate from the public funds of the state treasury. 'Zakaat' funds must be spent on the categories specified by the Qur'an.

In the absence of the Islamic state and in countries which lie outside the 'Islamic state', 'zakaat' has to be a voluntary institution to be upheld by local Muslim communities by sheer moral power. The amount so collected as a tax by the state has to be spent under the following heads of accounts i.e., payment:

1. To indigent or the poor.
2. To the needy who hesitate to [ask](#) for help (other than the beggars).
3. To functionaries who collect and distribute the 'zakaat' ..
4. To those whose hearts are to be won-over.
5. To those who have to be redeemed from bondage.

6. To those who are in debt.
7. In the cause of Allah.
8. To wayfarer, pilgrim or traveller.

The Qur'an says about the righteous (*muttaqeen*):

"In their wealth there was a right for the beggar and (for) the persons who did not ask." (Qur'an 51: 19)

'Zakaat' is the practical application of this Qur'anic observation.

'Tazkiah' means purifying the self as well as purifying the remaining wealth by paying 'zakaat'.

'Zakaat' not only purifies the property of the person who contributes it but also purifies his heart. Says the Qur'an :

"(O Prophet!) collect the alms from their wealth in order to cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity, and pray for them" (Qur'an 9: 103)

'Zakaat' purifies the heart of the recipient as well from envy and jealousy, from hatred and tensions. It fosters in his heart, instead, good will and warm wishes for the contributor. The recipient is under no obligation to the contributor, as he would have been had he received alms or charity directly at the hands of the donor. This way society at large will be purified and will free itself from class warfare and ill-feelings between different classes.

'Zakaat' is a most comforting consolation to the less fortunate people.

17. Sajdah

Sajdah literally means to bow down in adoration with the forehead touching the ground, to prostrates. *Sajdah* means to do obeisance to Allah. *Sajdah* is an act of worship in which the person's forehead touches the ground. *As-sajdah* is the title of *Surah 32, ayah 15* of which says "They only believe in Our messages who, when they are reminded of them, fall down adoring and celebrate the praises of their Lord".

Sajdah is an expression of homage peculiar to Islam. It expresses physically the worshipper's humility and sense of utter in-significance before Allah. It has often been translated as 'prostration' which, is lying flat on the ground. In *sajdah*, however one bends the knees from a sitting position, resting them, the palms, and the forehead on the ground in one complete posture.

In the following *ayaat* this term has been used three times respectively.

“It is We who created you and gave you shape; then We said unto the angels ‘Prostrate (*isjuduu*) yourself before Adam!’ Where upon they (all) prostrated (*fasijaduu*) themselves, save *Ibliss*: he was not among those who prostrated (*saaji-diin*) themselves” (Qur’an 7: 11)

“And lo! We said unto the angels, ‘prostrate (*is-juduu*) yourselves before Adam’ where from they all prostrated (*fasjuduu*) themselves save *Ibliis*. Said he: ‘shall I prostrate (*asjuduu*) myself before one whom you have created out of clay?’ ” (Qur’an 17: 61).

18. *Islam*

The word ‘Islam is derived from the root ‘*salama*’ meaning to be safe, to be in sound condition. It also means to submit, to surrender.

“For Islam, the word ‘commitment’ is more positive, active and responsible than are ‘surrender’ or ‘submission’ which the Orientalists and missionaries use.”¹

‘*Islam*’ means commitment or conformity to the will of Allah. Peace means to be at peace with one self and one’s surroundings and submission means commitment, confirmity or resignation to the will of Allah. A broader meaning of the word ‘Islam’ is to achieve peace by committing to the will of Allah.

In the Qur’an the word Islam is used for doing homage to Allah.

Obedience and agreement to the Divine law is Islam. This law is responsible to develop the inherent and latent capacities of everything in the universe to the point of its ultimate perfection. Every thing in the universe is a part of a grand design and is actively taking part in an all round evolution. The entire creation is proceeding on this way which is the *Siraatul Mustaqim*. Human society, because of the free will of man, is an exception to this universal law. Man according to the Divine plan has to play his role deliberately and voluntarily. To perform his function properly he requires Divine guidance. This is provided through *Al-Risalah*. Following the Divine and universal law, according to the life provided by the messenger of Allah, is Islam. Thus Islam is the natural and most obvious path that is available to man.

Islam signifies a moral attitude and a way of life. Islam is a unique religion or a way of life with a name which itself describes it.

The word ‘*Muslim*’ means one who has committed himself to the will of Allah. This is done by declaring that “there is no ‘*ilah*’ (god) except Allah and Muhammad (S) is the messenger of Allah”. In a broader sense, anyone who is

willingly committed to the will of Allah is a Muslim. All the Prophets preceding the Prophet Muhammad (S) and their respective followers were Muslims:

“Say: ‘We believe in Allah and what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Ibrahim, *Ismaeel*, *Is-haaq*, *Yakuub*, and their descendants, and what was given to *Musa*, *Isaa* and the Prophets by their Lord. We do not delete any one from amongst them, and we are committed to (live at) peace with Him.’” (Qur’an 3: 83)

There are persons who are born Muslims and have Muslim names but are not committed to the will of Allah. One cannot, therefore, judge Islam by looking at such persons. The state of being a Muslim depends on the degree to which one is committed to the will of Allah.

19. *Surah*

Surah literally means a row or series such as a line of bricks arranged in a wall. It also means fence or protecting wall of a city. According to some the literal meaning of *surah* is rank of soldiers in an army or ‘degree’, ‘gradation’ or ‘step’, by which we mount up.

As a term ‘*surah*’ is exclusively used for chapter or part of the Qur’an. According to the subject matter, the Qur’an is arranged in 114 ‘*surahs*’ of very un-equal size. Each ‘*surah*’ consists of a number of *ayaat* (*ayaat*). *Surah* 2 contains 286 *ayaat*, whereas ‘*surahs*’ 103 and 108 contains only 3 *ayaat* each. A logical thread however, runs through all the *ayaat* of a *surah*.

Sometimes a whole ‘*surah*’ was revealed at a time and some times, portions of the ‘*surah*’. Those portions were arranged together according to subject matter under the directions of the Prophet.

All the 114 *Surahs* in Qur’an have names, which are mostly derived from a distinguishing word in the text 29 *Surahs* start with *muqatta’* out of which four are named after the letters e.g. *Surah Ta-Ha* (20), *Surah Ya Sin* (36), *Surah Sad* (38), and *Surah Qaf* (50).

20. *Sheerk*

To worship others along with Allah is called ‘*sheerk*’. *Sheerk* means polytheism, idolatry, paganism and it is opposite of *tawhid*. *Mushrik* is such an associator.

The polytheists have associated with Allah other beings that have:

- a. Material existence such as fire, animals, stars, eminent personalities etc.

- b. Those which are not perceptible. These are believed to be administering various functions in the universe.

According to Islam, to worship any of the above-mentioned beings and to solicit their help is degrading for man who has been placed, by Allah, above the entire creation including the '*malaikah*'.

21. *Shifa't*

Recommendation or intercession on the Day of Judgment for forgiveness is termed as '*shifa't*'.

The Pagan Arabs believed that their gods, goddesses, angels (whom they believed to be Allah's daughters) and the imaginary deities which they worshipped would act as mediators between their worshippers and Allah, and that they (the deities) would intercede for them (the worshippers).

The Jews also believed that they were the chosen people and that they would be exempt from requital on the Day of Judgment.

Similarly, The Christians believed in the 'vicarious redemption', i.e., Jesus Christ has laid down his life for the sins of human beings, and those who believe in Christ, will be absolved from sins.

All these beliefs only amounted to a short cut to heaven. This is nothing but a wishful thinking and it is unfortunate that this doctrine lingers on even among certain classes of Muslims, who entertain the belief that the Prophet or the living or dead saints would intercede on the Day of Judgment, and would prevail upon Allah to pardon all their sins.

It is obvious that such beliefs are contrary to the Qur'anic concept that men will be strictly judged according to their good or bad deeds performed in this world and that man's salvation does not depend on interference and outside factors. The doctrine of intercession is therefore, not different from the attitude of those who reject the idea of 'hereafter' itself. Qur'an observes in not less than 5 *ayaat*, that "no bearer of burden shall be made to bear another's burden" (Qur'an 5:164, 17:15, 35:19, 39:7, and 53:38). Obviously its implication is that it categorically denies the possibility of any 'mediation' between the sinner and Allah. The belief in 'unqualified intercession' amounts to interference in the Divine Law of requital.

Simply because the term '*shifaat*' has been used not less than eleven times in the Qur'an, it cannot be concluded that the Qur'an subscribes to the concept of '*shifaat*' as it prevailed in the Pre - Islamic era.

In the Pre-Islamic concepts, unqualified redemption of sin was expected without any regard to the good or bad deeds performed by an individual in this

world. In the Pre-Islamic doctrine of '*shifaat*', the sinner i.e., the person for whom intercession was sought were not at all taken into consideration.

The Qur'an however, rejects the Pre-Islamic belief in unqualified intercession, whether it be by pagan gods or deities (living or dead saints, angels etc.), or even the Prophets of Allah. "The denial of the possibility of unqualified intercession stresses, indirectly, not only God's omniscience ---- which requires no 'mediator' ---- but also the immutability of His will: and thus it connects with His almightiness".¹

The Qur'an in the first instance, laid down the general principle that Allah will have absolute power of requital on the Day of Judgment and that no intercession will be accepted. The Qur'an has then elaborated the procedure which it has prescribed in regard to '*shifaat*': Allah will have absolute power of requital on the Day of Judgment and that no one will have the authority to intercede and that no sinner will be pardoned without His permission.

There are four sets of *ayaat* in the Qur'an concerning the concept of '*shifaat*'.

1. The Qur'an has categorically rejected the Pre-Islamic doctrine of '*shifaat*'. This is a general rule which is applicable to the person who is supposed to intercede as well as to the sinners who are supposed to get pardoned because of intercession.

"Be prepared for the Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them, nor ransom taken from them, and none shall be succoured," (Qur'an 2: 48)

"Be prepared for the Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be of any benefit to them and none shall be succoured". (Qur'an 2:123)

" spend (in Our way) out of what We have granted you as sustenance before there come a Day when there will be no bargaining and no intercession " (Qur'an 2:254)

" Say: 'Allah's alone is the power to bestow the right of intercession' " (Qur'an 39:44).

As observed above, as per the Pre-Islamic concept of intercession, unqualified redemption of sin was expected without any regard to the good or bad deeds performed by an individual. Thus as per the Pre-Islamic doctrine of intercession, the sinner or the person for whom intercession was sought for, was not specifically considered.

When the Qur'an introduced the 'qualified concept of intercession', it

elaborated two aspects:

A. “And so, of no benefit to them could be the intercession of any, that would intercede for them”. (Qur’an 74: 48)

B. No one is qualified to intercede without the permission of Allah.

On the Day of Judgment none shall have the power of intercession, except those to whom Allah will grant permission to intercede. This right of intercession will be granted to Prophets in respect of such of the sinners as would have already achieved His redemptive acceptance by way of their repentance or basic goodness.

“..... who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave” (Qur’an 2: 255)

“..... They cannot intercede for any but (for) those whom He has (already) graced with Him goodly acceptance, since they themselves stand in reverent awe for Him.” (Qur’an 21: 28)

C. No individual (for whom intercession is sought for), shall get the benefit of intercession (whoever be the person to intercede), unless Allah regards that individual a fit person to be pardoned or, to have the benefit of intercession.

On that day, intercession shall not benefit (any one) except him in whose case (Allah) the Most gracious will have granted permission therefore, and whose word (of faith or of repentance) He will have accepted.¹ (Qur’an 20: 109)

“And before Him, intercession can be of no avail (to any) save one in whose case he may have granted leave (therefore) - - - -”. (Qur’an 34: 23)

“Their (angels’) intercession can be of least benefit (to any one) except that Allah has given permission (to intercede) for whom so ever He wills with whom He is well pleased”. (Qur’an 53:26)

D. It may also be noted that the Prophet is prohibited from praying for the forgiveness of the unbelievers, the polytheists and the hypocrites, who died before repentance:

“It is not proper for you (O Prophet!) to decide whether He shall accept their repentance or chastise them for, behold, they are but wrongdoers”. (Qur’an 3: 128)

“It is not proper for the Prophet and for those who have attained faith, to pray that they who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah, be forgiven (by Him), even though they happened to be (their) near of kin- - - after it has been made

clear to them that those (dead sinners) are destined for the blazing fire". (Qur'an 9: 113)

22. *Sabr*

'*Sabr*' is derived from the root '*sabara*' meaning to bind, to be patient or constant, to endure patiently. One who is patient or constant is called '*saabir*'.

The word '*sabr*' implies many shades of meaning, which it is impossible to comprehend in one English word. It implies, (a) patience in the sense of being thorough and not hasty. (b) Patient perseverance, constancy, steadfastness, firmness of purpose, (c) systematic as opposed to spasmodic or erratic action, (d) a cheerful attitude or resignation and understanding in sorrow, defeat or suffering, as opposed to murmuring or complaining, but saved from more passivity or listlessness by element of constancy or steadfastness.

An additional meaning implied in '*sabr*' is self-restraint. It implies restraining fear, anger and desire.

The patient perseverance, '*sabr*' is given in the Qur'an the status of prayer (*salaat*):

"Nay seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance (*sabr*) and prayer (*salaat*): It is indeed hard (task) except to those who are humble (in attitude!)" (Qur'an 2:45)

"O you who believe! seek help with patient perseverance (*sabr*) and prayer (*salaat*): For Allah is with those who patiently persevere." (Qur'an 2:153)

"What can be a higher reward for patience, perseverance, self restraint and constancy than that God should be with us? For this promise opens the door to every kind of spiritual well-being."¹

One shade of meaning of '*sabr*' is to restrain. In the world we live in we have to restrain our personal desires and subject them to the guidance of reason. At times we have to face situations which are against our temperament. No success in individual as well as collective undertaking is possible unless the policy of '*sabr*' is adopted.

According to the Qur'an Allah acknowledges the sincerity of those who show patience, firmness and self control (i.e. *sabireen*), who are true (in words and deeds) i.e. '*sadiqeen*', who worship devoutly i.e. '*qaniteen*' who spend in the way of Allah i.e., '*munfiqeen*' and who pray for forgiveness i.e., '*mustaghfireen*' in the hours of dawn. (Qur'an 3:16 and 17)

23. *Salaat*

Salaat is one of the most important religious practices of Islam. It is the second pillar of Islam. It is not only the daily worship, formal and ritualistic prayer (as different from spontaneous prayers) but forms the basic unit of organization of Islamic society. As a discipline imposed it is incumbent on every Muslim to establish '*salaat*' which denotes connection or contact with the fellow believers. The '*salaat*' can therefore, be explained as obligatory congregational prayer. It is a unique prayer in which every individual is in contact with the Almighty and at the same time there is a contact of every individual with other fellow believers.

The term '*salaat*' is rooted in the word meaning to follow. The term '*salaat*' is also rooted in the word meaning to give movements to hips. The practice which creates movement and activity in the society is thus, called '*salaat*'.

'*Salaat*' as a term applies to the supreme act of worship in Islam '*salaat*' and '*rububiah*' are a kin to one another. Allah has provided a self-operative system for the '*rububiah*' of the universe. Man is the only disorderly element in nature. For the '*rububiah*' of the human society, '*salaat*' is a system which represents '*rububiah*'.

The term '*salaat*', if from Allah means blessing and if from man means worship. Congregational prayer or worship is the obligatory or '*fardh*' prayer which has to be offered five fixed times a day. These prayers form the main component of the '*salaat*'. '*salaat*' should be performed with perfect devotion and concentrated attention. It should be performed with calm and modest piety. In '*salaat*' The group must stand behind the Imam' in straight rows, foot to foot and shoulder to shoulder without discrimination between the worshippers. The English word 'salute' has connotational affinity to '*salaat*'.

'*Musalli*' as a derivative of the term means the person who performs the '*salaat*'. '*Musalla*' is a small mat, prayer rug or carpet, the word is also used for praying place.

It is mistakenly referred to as 'prayer'. 'Prayer' is an act of worship possible in any form, language or condition. '*salaat*', on the other hand, has to be performed only at fixed times, in a prescribed manner. The '*salaat*' must be preceded by '*wadhu*' (ablution) and '*adhan*' (call to the '*salaat*'). '*salaat*' is always recited in Arabic. It is obligatory on every individual but it has, preferably, to be performed in a group. It is enjoined on every Muslim to 'establish' '*salaat*' i.e., to make arrangements regarding the place, timings, etc.,

for the congregational '*salaat*'. This necessitated the establishment of Mosques (*Masajid*, sing. *Masjid*), for the congregational worship.

24. *Saum*

Saum or fasting is the fourth pillar of Islam. To abstain from eating, drinking and carnal desires from dawn (about 1 1/2 hour before sun rise) to dusk (sun set) during the month of *Ramadhan*, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, in a prescribed manner is called '*saum*'. Muslims observe '*saum*' with the intention of complying with the order of Allah. They get purity and spiritual benefits as rewards. Some people have a wrong notion that abstaining from food for long spells may be harmful, Far from weakening the body, '*saum*' rejuvenates and invigorates it. Those who observe '*saum*' as a discipline do get the material benefit inherent in it.

Normally the '*saum*' should not affect a person's daily avocations and it should not be a pretext for neglecting daily duties. Islam never approves - - much less demands - - of keeping vigil during the whole night and preserving the day in sleep and indolence.

At the end of the fasting month, there is the grand festival, *Idul Fitr*, on the first day of the month of *Shawwal* which the Muslims celebrate with gaiety. Fasting is prohibited on this day.

25. *Zulm*

'*Zulm*' is derived from the root '*zalama*' meaning to injure, to be unjust, oppressive or, tyrannical towards anyone. It also means to be guilty of injustice.

'*Zulm*' literally means not putting a thing in the proper place. '*Zulm*' implies harm, wrong, injustice or transgression, and may have reference to one self. When wrong is done to others, it implies tyranny and oppression. The idea of wrong naturally connects itself with darkness, which is another shade of meaning carved with the root word. One who commits '*Zulm*' is called '*zalim*' (plural *zalimun*).

In Qur'anic usage '*Zulm*' is of three kinds, (a) between a man and Allah, (b) between man and man and (c) man towards his self i.e., '*nafs*'

In the following *ayah* two kinds of '*Zulm*' i.e. (a) and (c) are mentioned:

"..... And (by their sinning) they did no harm (*zalamu*) unto Us-but (only) against their own selves did they sin (*yazlimun*)" (Qur'an 2:57).

It is difficult to identify any *ayah* in the Qur'an which exclusively refers to tyranny and oppression inflicted by men upon his fellow beings. It is so because the Qur'an regards the attitude of transgression against Allah and of injustice

towards one's own self, as '*zulm*'.

Allah's benevolence which is available to man in the shape of Divine 'guidance' is not available to unjust people: "..... and Allah does not guide the unjust people ('*qawamaz-zaalimiin*')” (Qur'an 2:258, 3:86, 6:144, 9:109 etc).

The Qur'an also says:

"..... and Allah does not love the unjust ('*zaalimiin*')” (Qur'an 3:57, 3:140 etc).

"..... and the curse of Allah is on the unjust ('*zaalimiin*')” (Qur'an 7:44).

The Qur'an exhorts us to see for ourselves as to what happened in the end to the evil-doers of the past:

"..... see then what was the end of the unjust ('*zaalimiin*')” (Qur'an 10:39).

Full comprehension of the Qur'anic usage of the term '*Zulm*' creates a realization of the nature and the consequence of '*Zulm*' as a crime. Such realization is itself sufficient to restrain a person from committing it.

The root '*zalama*' with different derivatives is used three times in the following *ayah*.

"Whatever such people (companions of Fire) may spend in the life of this world is like that freezing wind which blows upon and destroys the corn fields. They are a people who have been hurtful ('*zalamu*') to themselves. Allah has not done any injustice to them ('*zalamahum*'); on the other hand, they wronged ('*yazlimuun*') themselves". (Qur'an 3:117)

26. *Adl* and *ihsaan*

Adl

The word '*adl*' is used in the Qur'an both in the sense of justice and also in the sense of compensation, return, alternative or substitute.

This term is mostly used in the sense of justice as a near synonym of the Arabic word '*qist*'.

'*Adl*' is "not merely the justice dispensed by the courts; it covers justice in all spheres of life. Justice signifies the condition where every individual gets what is due to him..... The Qur'an has laid great stress on '*adl*' and the establishment of '*adl*' is the ultimate end of the Qur'anic Social Order."¹

There are two kinds of attributes which are associated with Allah, one

relates exclusively to His Being (*Zaat*) and the other attributes are those which Allah Himself desires to see them in His bondsmen. For example those Muslims who had adopted "the manners of Allah" have been directed by Him to declare that they have adopted the color of Allah. One of the outstanding aspect of Allah's color is justice (*adl*). Hence He is never un-just to His creatures. Then there are attributes which are exclusive to His Being are not to be shared by His creatures. To make others join Him in these attributes is *sheerk*, which the Qur'an so forcefully denounces.

Salvation of man will depend on the day of Judgment not only on grounds of justice but also on the basis of Allah's Mercy. Hence He declares in the Qur'an that He has made the exercise of mercy incumbent on Himself.

As it has already been mentioned above a believer has to be just in his dealings with his fellow beings as Allah is with His creatures. Hence several injunctions have been issued in the Qur'an for the believers. One is directed to the Prophet himself

"Unto this then summon (them O Muhammad) and be you upright as you are commanded and follow not their lusts but say: 'I believe in whatever revelation Allah has sent down, and I am commanded to be just'" (Qur'an 42:15).

Ihsaan

Ihsaan is derived from the root '*hasana*' meaning to have proportion, to be beautiful. *Ihsaan* means restoring the disturbed equilibrium by the individual for his deficiencies. *Ihsaan* helps to maintain the balance of the social system. Qur'an, therefore, enjoins '*ihsaan*' along with '*adl*':

In strictly and blindly applying the yardstick of justice no human consideration is involved. The behaviour of the individual or of the society tends to become harsh and devoid of compassion. No room is left for loving-kindness. The Qur'an therefore, enjoins the dispensation of justice with definite inclination towards kindness (*ihsaan*):

"Verily Allah enjoins justice (*adl*) and doing of good (*ihsaan*) and giving to the fellow men (out of what you have). And He forbids all that is, shameful and all that which is wrong as well as envy. He exhorts you (repeatedly) so that you might bear (all this) in mind." (Qur'an 16: 90)

The word is also used in the Qur'an in the sense of righteousness:

"Those among the 'migrants' and 'helpers' as well as those who follow them in (the way of) righteousness (*ihsaan*) - - Allah is well pleased with them, and well pleased are they with Him. And for them has He readied gardens through which running water flow, therein to abide beyond the count of

time: 'This is the triumph supreme'. (Qur'an 9:100).

In several *ayaat* the Qur'an has enjoined upon man to behave with his parents with kindness (*ihsaan*) (Qur'an 2: 83, 4: 36, 6: 151, 17: 23, 46: 15 etc).

One is also enjoined to be good towards all people with whom one is in contact:

"And worship Allah and ascribe no partner to Him. Do good to your parents, to near of kin, to orphan, to the needy, to the neighbour who is of kin and to the neighbor who is stranger, and to the companion by your side and to wayfarer and to those who are under your care. Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful." (Qur'an 4:36)

Ihsaan is to do good to others, confer favours, or to perform an action in perfect form. *Ihsaan* not only applies to the *Salaat* or to the other forms of Worship, but to all human activity as well. Man should always feel the presence of Allah. With that feeling the direction of every human action will be towards a higher goal. The concept of '*ihsaan*' is the key to improve the quality of all human activity.

The good deeds performed with the full consciousness of Allah's presence are also called '*ihsaan*'. This is in fact the real service to mankind. According to the Qur'an, there is no reward for such actions i.e., *ihsaan* except *ihsaan* (Qur'an 55: 60). This reward is with Allah and it is also obligatory on the recipient of such *ihsaan*. In the view of this observation of the Qur'an, mere expression of gratitude for '*ihsaan*' is not sufficient. Return of service of similar high quality is obligatory.

27. Al-Aqibah

Al-aqibah means end, consequence, sequel, outcome, final issue of all things, destiny of all things, or result. None of these words, however, give the exact and total meaning of the term '*aqibah*'.

Allah has by His own will established laws of life, the main being the law of cause and effect. According to this law, man has to reap both in this world and in the other, what he has sown with his own hands. If one takes to the straight path in this world, he is bound to reach the right destination. If one goes astray, and takes to crooked ways of living, he is bound to get in recompense evil, grief, and pain as his due. According to the Qur'an.

"One will earn only that for which he strives". (Qur'an 2:286).

Evil will be the result of evil action. '*Aqibat*', end or result (whether immediate or eventual) of an evil action will be nothing but evil, and one cannot expect good as an outcome of an evil action like '*kufir*', '*fisq*' or transgression i.e.

exceeding the bounds prescribed by Allah. When the Qur'an says that the '*sunnat*' of Allah does not change, it means that immutable are the laws of life, laid down by Allah Himself by His own will. This truth applies both to the present and the future life of man as it was applicable to him in the past. The Qur'an gives discretion to man to take to whatever way of living he likes after showing him the Din, Islam as the right way of living. Similarly it gives freedom of action also with a warning that the disbelievers will come to know that the happy sequel (*aqibat*) will be the lot of the believers alone and the wrong doers will never get '*falah*' or success.

28. *Ghayb*

The term '*Ghayb*' is derived from the root '*ghaba*'. Different derivatives have been used not less than 60 times in the Qur'an. '*Ghayb*' signifies the realities which are concealed from the five human senses. '*Ghayb*' is beyond the range of human perception, either in an absolute or in a relative sense. As, for instance the belief in the existence of the supreme being, a belief that life has meaning and purpose, knowledge of the innermost reasons of Allah's decrees and of the ultimate destiny of any human being in the hereafter etc., are beyond the reach of human perception. This word "is used in the Qur'an to denote all those sectors or phases of realities which lie beyond the range of human perception and cannot, therefore, be proved or disproved by scientific observation; or even adequately comprised within the accepted categories of speculative thought".^[1] By declaring that the Qur'an is a guidance for those who believe in the existence of that which is beyond perception, the Qur'an says in effect, that it will remain a closed book for all whose mind cannot accept this fundamental premise. Thus the concept of '*ghayb*' constitutes the basic premise for an understanding of the Qur'an. According to Muhammad Asad: "All truly religious cognition arises from, and is based on the fact that only a small segment of reality is open to man's perception and imagination, and that by far the larger part of it escapes his comprehension altogether." *Ghayb* as a word has been used in the Qur'an for such aspects of the universe which cannot be understood by the five senses".^[2]

Through the concept of '*ghayb*', the Qur'an has most reasonably showed the way to know the unknown through our own observation and also through our imagination. The Qur'an does not expect us to believe in some thing which is beyond human perception. This approach is very clear from the following *ayaat* the Qur'an:

".....you will not see any disproportion in the creation of (Allah) the Most Gracious; then look again, can you see any disorder. Turn your eyes again and again: your vision will return back to you dazzled and defeated." (Qur'an 67:3-4)

The Qur'an enjoins us to reflect on the '*ayaat*' of the universe and leaves us to draw our own conclusion according to our understanding, albeit our

human limitations.

The approach of science is observation and experimentation. The '*ghayb*' is outside the scope of science. As human knowledge expands things from the realm of '*ghayb*' come within our knowledge. Still there is much beyond the grasp of our senses and therefore outside the scope of science. Says the Qur'an:

"For, with Him are the Keys to *Ghayb* (the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception): None knows then but He" (Qur'an6:59).

The Qur'an however enjoins us to ponder after observation and experimentation. Thus man's journey to the 'unknown' starts.

To believe in '*ghayb*' also implies to believe in the Qur'anic declaration:

".....you will not find any variation in our line of action" (Qur'an 17:77).

Many human activities such as sowing of seeds, etc., are based on observation and belief that law of nature is not mutable.

There is no exact equivalent of '*ghayb*' in any language. In the common parlance it is erroneously rendered as, 'unknown', 'unseen', or 'secret' without giving the real significance of the word as a result of which the belief in the unknown appears to be irrational. '*Ghayb*' being the very breadth of religion, is generally interpreted by the commentators as what lies beyond the world of 'sense' and what is undiscernible by mere reasons. It is, therefore, no wonder if materialists regard religion itself as, 'nonsense' and 'irrational'. In fact belief in the realities which are not within the purview of human knowledge and intelligence (based on the five senses) is not at all irrational. These verities which, although beyond the scope of human observation and experience on physical plane, are, in fact ingrained in human instinct. It may not be correct to surmise that it is impossible to experience or comprehend them and that one has to blindly accept them. Man is created in such a fashion that he is positively aware of the existence of the Supreme Being, has a definite concept of accountability and so on. With some, these perceptions are more clear than with others. Every human being is born with these natural inclinations.

Thus it is the evil designs or motivated teachings which degrade human minds from the subtle super sensory realm to the materialistic plane.

Belief in the unseen is neither superstition nor the product of a lower form of intellect. To have a clear perception of '*ghayb*' is the prerogative of human beings. For animals only the present is real. The past and the future have almost no existence for them. Their eyes cannot see beyond the present. As against the animals, for human beings the past and the future, although hidden (*ghayb*) from their mind, have not only individual but

collective significance. Human brain has broken the barriers of past and future. Human beings possess two distinct faculties of the brain: memory and imagination. These two faculties, which are beyond the purview of the five senses, influence the human activities.

The human mind is not content even with these faculties. Making life more and more meaningful is the goal of man. To achieve this end, it is necessary for man to determine his own place in the universe.

Human intellect alone cannot succeed in unfolding the riddles of nature. Man is at a crossroads today: Either to fully rely on human intelligence and regard human life as a separate entity different from the universal order of nature, or taking the help of his own inherent faculties go beyond the limits of the intelligence and visualize the 'unseen order' as a whole.

The supreme good of humanity lies in harmoniously adjusting with this order and in regarding human life as an integral part of the entire cosmos.

By developing the inherent faculties, one can visualize the unseen (*ghayb*).. Thus limitless horizons open before men and unending stages of evolution motivate the human spirit. The divine promise that man would be led step by step to even higher stages of development, stirs up the latent power of man and make him a willing traveller on the path of virtue.

Since the concepts which are covered by the expression 'ghayb' are beyond the range of human perception and since no human vocabulary can fully express them, the Qur'an has employed figurative language. The Qur'an has expressed them successfully in words and expressions which are generally employed in connection with tangible objects, and has used such terms and words which are within the comprehension of the human mind.

The figurative language used by the Qur'an cannot be termed as '*mutashabihaat*'. The figurative expressions used by the Qur'an are in no way ambiguous or un-intelligible, as observed by some erudite commentators. On the other hand the expressions are very clear. The purpose of the Qur'an is fully served by these expressions. It is the beauty of the Qur'an that without knowing the precise nature and other particulars (of Divine attributes, inspiration i.e. '*wahi*', '*Al-Saat*' etc.) one can fully grasp their real significance.

29. *Al-Qiyamah*

Al-Qiyamah literally means standing up. In the Qur'an it means the Day of Resurrection.

The arising (of men at the resurrection) and at '*Sa'a*', the Hour (or Day of Judgment) come under the general term '*Al-Ma'd*', 'the returning i.e. the return

of life after death’.

The Phrase ‘*Yawmal-Qiyamah*’ occurs 70 times in the Qur’an.

30. *Al-Kitab*

Al-Kitab means ‘the book’. As a term, it refers to the Book of Allah, the Divine writ. The third article of *Iman* is to believe in all the Books of Allah which He has sent down to mankind through His ‘*Rusul*’ (messengers). There is mention of some of the books viz. Book of Ibrahim, *Taurat*, *Zaboor* (Psalms) and *Injeel*, revealed to Prophet Isa. Of the innumerable prophets sent by Allah in all ages and to all the people, only 25 have been mentioned in the Qur’an. There is no mention of the names of the Books sent to other prophets mentioned in the Qur’an or (to the prophets) not mentioned in the Qur’an. Therefore, with regard to other existing religious books, we are not in a position to say with certainty, whether they were originally revealed books or not. But we tacitly believe, that whatever books have been sent down by Allah, were all true and Divine messages.

Of the books mentioned in the Qur’an, the book of Ibrahim is extinct and not traceable in the existing world literature. The other three Books are the Bibles (The Old and The New Testament) and the Qur’an. The Qur’an informs us that people have changed and interpolated these Books. Much of the original text of the earlier Books is also lost in the process of translation. Allah’s works have been mixed up with texts of their own making. This corruption and pollution of the Books has been on such a large scale, that even the Jews and the Christians themselves cannot but admit it. Moreover, they do not possess the original texts and have only the translation. We find that Allah’s words and those of men, have been mixed together in these books.

The Qur’an is the last of the Divine Books sent by Allah. In other words, the succession of Divine messages culminated in the revelation of the Qur’an. The text of the Qur’an is intact and there is no change in it whatsoever. The Qur’an is the word of Allah and there is no mixture of words of any human being in it. In the Qur’an, there is abundant evidence that it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S). The Qur’an is in Arabic language which is a living language. The message of the Qur’an is not for one nation or one race, but it is for the entire humanity. However, the message of the Qur’an which is the last of the revelations, and offers the final and perfect way to the spiritual fulfilment, appears to be some what different from the earlier Divine revelations, obviously due to the following three reasons among others.

- 1) The earlier Divine revelations were changed by way of deletions, interpolations, and corruptions of the text.
- 2) Every age had a revelation, suited to the particular needs

of the time and the people concerned.

- 3) The Qur'an, being *Al-Furqan*, pointed out the falsehood (*batil*) that had crept in earlier in the revelations. Such of the *ayaat* which pointed out and corrected the corruptions in the earlier revelations, were therefore, not found in the earlier revelations.

31. *Kufr*

'*Kufr*' is derived from the root '*kafara*'. Etymologically it means to cover, conceal, to hide some thing. Dark night is called '*al-kafir*' because, nothing is visible in the dark night. Similarly, a farmer is also called a *kafir* because, he hides or covers the seeds in the earth. *Kafir* is also derived from the same root and it is applied to a substance which has a good smell which covers all bad smells.

As a term '*kufr*' means disbelief, infidelity, blasphemy or in-gratitude. It is refusal, and active opposition to anything that the Prophet of Islam preached. *Kafir* is a disbeliever or an infidel. The term *kafir* is applicable only when the message is conveyed and if it is then opposed. *Kufr* means open denial, not hypocrisy. It implies a deliberate rejection of Faith, as opposed to a mistaken idea of Allah or *Iman*, which is not inconsistent with an earnest desire to see the truth.

Kuffar or *kafiroon* are both plural forms of *kafir*.

Kufr is the antonym of *shukr*. '*Shukr*' is acknowledgment of favors and bounties, whereas *kufr* is a denial thereof. This position is made very clear in several *ayaat* of the Qur'an, such as:

"Be grateful to Me, and reject not faith" (Qur'an 2: 152)

Kufr is also the opposite or negation of *Iman*. *Iman* is a declaration of truth whereas, '*kufr*' is its denial.

While clarifying the meaning of various terms the Qur'an has resorted to a unique method of frequently using the terms. Accordingly '*kufr*' with all its derivatives has been used in the Qur'an not less than 626 times. Moreover we find several *ayaat* wherein this term has been used twice. In the following *ayah* however, this term has been used three times:

"Behold, as for those who come to believe, and they deny the truth, (*kafaru*) and again come to believe, and again deny the truth (*kafaru*), and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth (*kufran*) - Allah will not forgive them, nor will He guide them in any way." (Qur'an 4:137)

32. *Malaikah*

Belief in the existence of beings called 'angels' is common to various faiths. It is also a fundamental belief of Islam. According to the Qur'an men are not the only beings created by Allah. Another order of beings are '*Malaikah*' who act as Allah's agents and serve Him in many a way. They have not been endowed with free will. According to the Qur'an *Malaikah* are absolutely obedient to Allah and they are commissioned with various functions in the universe. They meticulously perform the duties assigned to them by Allah. This is their worship and they are engaged in their worship and service to Him. The Angels have been assigned various duties: to administer Allah's punishments, to convey His messages and to perform various other functions such as *Jibril* conveying Divine Messages, *Michael* administering rain *Raad* causing thunder, etc.

Allah conveyed His revelations to the prophets including Muhammad (S), through *Jibril* (Gabriel), *Jibril* is also mentioned in the Qur'an as *Rooh-ulAmeen*, *Ar-Rooh*, *Roohulquds*.

The belief in *malaikah* is complementary to monotheism. By accepting '*malaikah*' as a part of Allah's creation, obediently serving Allah, this belief extricates the concept of *tawheed* from all probable impurities and makes it free from the danger of *sheerk*.

As a corollary to the belief in the divinity of God one has to accept the idea that the order or harmony that prevails in the universe is regulated and maintained by certain forces or functionaries created by Allah to be at work in the entire universe.

33. *Munafiq*

Munafiq is derived from the root '*nafaqa*', meaning a narrow road having two openings at the two ends. It "denotes an 'underground passage' having an outlet different from the entry and signifying, specifically, the complicated burrow of a field mouse, a lizard etc, from which the animal can easily escape, or in which it can outwit a pursuer."¹

From the same root (*nafaqa*) another set of words is used such as '*munfiq*' (one who spends in charity) '*anfaq*' (to spend in charity) '*yunfiq*' (one who spends in charity) '*yunfiqun*' (those who) spend in charity. Since they spend as regularly as they earn and since there is an outlet for their income the root '*nafaqa*' aptly represents their attitude in a positive way. As a term '*munafiq*' is used for a person whose outward appearance is different from the inner. The same term '*nafaqa*' represents the negative attitude in the term '*munafiq*'.

Munafiq thus means a hypocrite, a person who is 'two faced'. This type of man is called 'Mr. facing - both ways' in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's*

Progress. Such men declare that they are always with the Right but calmly intrigue with evil and injustice, and even make injustice their judge if their personal interests are served in that way. While the western term hypocrite invariably implies conscious, dissembling with the intent to deceive other, the Qur'anic term *munafiq* is also applied to a person who, being weak or un-certain in his beliefs or moral convictions, merely deceives himself.

When Islam was not yet powerful, the hypocrites pretended to be with the Muslims, but were in league with their enemies. When Allah granted victory to Islam their position became awkward.

Kafir is a person who openly denies the truth. *Munafiq* or hypocrite professes that he is believer, but he does not accept *Iman* at heart. The *Kafir* has at least the forth-rightness to proclaim his disbelief. He is a person who has refused to accept *Iman*. *Munafiqun* (plural of '*Munafiq*'), are found among the Muslims who are not sincere to the Islamic teachings at heart, yet pretend to be Muslims.

The term '*munafiq*' was first used in Medina after *hijrah* (migration). There were such persons who were two faced: they were apparently Muslims but *Iman* had not entered into their hearts. Whenever any sacrifice was required they showed their indifference. They had, infact, accepted Islam on the level of diplomacy. Islam, in the early period, had serious set-backs, due to the attitude of such persons. In future, also, such persons can be harmful for Islam. Muslims should always beware with such persons.

The identity of the '*munafiq*' is that, he is selfish and opportunist. If he sees any benefit in adopting '*kufr*', he adopts it unhesitatingly.

The term '*munafiq*' being an important term, the Qur'an has determined its exact meaning by using it again and again in different contexts. Not only the frequency of this term is comparatively very high but in several *ayaat* this term is used twice. It is interesting to note that in the following *ayaat* the different derivatives of the root '*nafakha*' have been used thrice.

1. "It is not for you (O Prophet!) to make people follow the right path since it is Allah (alone) who guides whom He wills. And whatever good you may spend (*tunfiqun*) on others is for your own good, provided that you spend (*tunfiqun*) only out of a longing for Allah's countenance; for, whatever good you may spend (*tunfiqun*) will be repaid unto you in full, and you shall not be wronged." (Qur'an 2: 272)

In this *ayah* the positive aspect of the root '*nafakha*' is used:

2. "The hypocrites both men and women (*munafiqun* and *munafiqat*) are all of

a kind: they enjoin the doing of what is wrong and forbid the doing of what is right, and withhold their hands (from doing good). They are oblivious of Allah and so He is oblivious of them. Verily, the hypocrites (*munafiqeen*) - it is they, who are iniquitous." (Qur'an 9: 67)

In this *ayah* the negative aspect of the term '*munafiq*' is used.

34. *Tawheed*

Monotheism or the unity of Allah is one of the fundamental principles of Islam. The Qur'an teaches uncompromising and pure monotheism i.e Allah is All Powerful, Ruler and Master of all. He requires no partners nor has any offspring or family. He alone is worthy of worship. The basic testimony of *Iman* is '*La Ilaha Il Allah*'. This testimony implies that there is one Allah for the entire universe. It also implies that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah.

"One has to believe in the Unity of God by recognizing that the entire Universe, both visible and invisible, owes its existence to but one Supreme Being and is sustained by Him".¹

Tawheed means exclusive obedience to the laws of Allah as embodied in the Qur'an.

35. *Tawfeeq*

Tawfeeq is derived from the root '*wafiq*' meaning to cause an agreement or reconciliation between two parties. '*Tawfeeq*' as a term means reconciliation or accomplishment of one's wishes.

The literal meaning of '*tawfeeq*' is inducement or suggestion. In the Qur'an this word is used for Divine impulse or for Divine direction to a right issue. It is always related to a kind of inspiration that comes from Allah to His servant for doing successfully any good act, which amounts to an accomplishment in the sight of Allah.

The term *tawfeeq* is used in the following *ayaat*:

"(The Hypocrites especially those from among the Jews will come swearing and will say) '*..... we intended not but good and with Divine impulse.*' " (Qur'an 4:62)

In almost all the translations the word '*tawfeeq*' is rendered as concord, amity, conciliation, or harmony.

"..... if they both want to set things right, Allah may bring about their

reconciliation....." (Qur'an 4:35).

In fact 'Divine impulse' or 'Divine direction' appears to be appropriate and more suitable in the context. The same sense is conveyed in the following *ayah*:

"..... and the Divine direction (*tawfeeq*) (in my mission) rests with none but Allah....." (Qur'an 11: 88)

Tawfeeq also means full recompense or a fitting reward as in: (Qur'an 78:26).

36. *Taqwa*

Taqwa means heedfulness, to be cautious and to save. As a term '*taqwa*' means to abstain from sin, from the possibilities of sin, and from the consequences of sin. It means to restrain or guard one's behavior from evil. It implies righteousness, piety and good conduct. The English equivalents namely, righteousness, piety etc. do not properly express the real meaning of the word. Deviation from the path of right conduct leads man to ruin. '*Taqwa*' helps to keep him on the right path. *Taqwa* involves not only saving one self from the forces of destruction, but also stabilizing one's personality through the preservation and enforcement of the laws of Allah. It means, the faithful and efficient performance of all the duties that Allah has enjoined upon man through revealed guidance.

Taqwa influences the activities, behaviour, manner and character of a Muslim. *Taqwa* is the quality of heeding Allah's decree. *Taqwa* requires a proper attitude of the mind by grasping the presence of Allah, the nature and limitations of human life. *Taqwa* requires judicious use of wealth, proper use of physical, mental, and moral abilities and faculties of man. It demands a high degree of self-control over one's emotions like anger, greed, vanity etc. A moral capacity for forgiveness, patience, piety righteousness and meaningful faith are inter-related, and all pour into one channel. They lead to Islam and build up the true personality of a Muslim.

Taqwa is a particular attitude of man towards cosmic realities, social phenomena not excluded. It has been metaphorically described as the care and attention of a person who passes along a narrow track both sides bordered with thorny bushes. If this state of human activity with regard to the selection of right way for a right cause is based in the fear of Allah then it will be known

as *Taqwa*.

Muttaqi means God fearing and pious person. *Muttaqeen* (plural of *Muttaqi*) are the heedful, those who do their duty to religion cautiously.

'*Birr*' is a near synonym of '*taqwa*'. The basic meaning of '*birr*' are 'largeness', or 'extensiveness'. It is rendered in English as 'virtuous or pious deeds'; in fact it has a much wider connotation.

Birr signifies individual conduct that tends to expand the human personality, which ensures the fulfillment and happiness of the whole society. Such conduct is conclusive to rid society of pettiness and narrow mindedness. It helps to widen its outlook and ensures for all our abundant supply of the necessities of life.

37. *Tawakkal*

The word '*tawakkal*' is derived from the root '*wakala*' meaning to commit anything into another's keeping.

'*Tawakkal*' is an important word of the Qur'an. The literal meaning of '*tawakkal*' is to rely on someone, or to entrust some work to a person of confidence. As a term '*tawakkal*' means reliance on Allah. In other words, in performance of a deed, while adopting a logical course of action, having full confidence in Allah for the results is '*tawakkal*'. False Sufis have taught to ignore the causes and to avoid efforts. They have explained the word '*tawakkal*' as depending on the help as an external factor without any effort.

"The term '*wakil*' denotes 'one who is entrusted with the management of (another person's) affairs', or 'is responsible for (another person's) conduct'. When applied to God, it is sometimes used in the sense of 'guardian': (e.g., in 3:173), or defender: (e.g., in 4:109), or in combination with the phrase '*ala kulli shay*' in (as, e.g., in 6:102 or 11:12) in the sense of the 'One who has every thing in His care' ".¹

In fact, '*tawakkal*' is to perform a deed with full dedication, and then to expect the results from Allah. The reliance should be with the full confidence that if there is any good (*khair*) in the deed, Allah will surely give the best rewards, for certainly Allah gives rewards for sincere efforts and dedicated work.

"There is an injunction in the Qur'an to hold consultation in matters of importance; and to go ahead when a decision is taken, having full trust in Allah; Verily Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)" (Qur'an 3:159).

The belief of a Muslim should be that if Allah does not will, no amount of endeavor will bear any result. If He wills, then there is no one to defeat our efforts.

'*Tawakkal*' is also a kind of prayer. As prayer is exclusively for Allah, '*tawakkal*' (reliance) is also on Allah and Allah alone. Having reliance on any one other than Allah, is '*sheerk*'. If one entirely relies on apparent causes, then he will be a loser. "put thy trust in Allah, for Allah is sufficient as a guardian (to thee)" (Qur'an 33:3).

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CHAPTER - 4

IDIOMS AND APHORISMS OF THE QUR'AN

Idiom is a mode of expression peculiar to a language. Words and phrases sometimes have a different connotation from what they literally mean. It is a peculiarity of phraseology approved by usage and often having a meaning other than its grammatical or logical one. In other words, idiom is an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself, having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements. Thus every idiom is peculiar to its language having a meaning other than the meaning of its components. While rendering an idiom into another language it has to be interpreted according to its usage in the language to which it belongs.

The Qur'an has used several idioms. It is but, necessary to identify them, otherwise there is every possibility that a student of the Qur'an will try to seek the message of the Qur'an through the components and will be greatly misled.

When the science of Qur'anic commentary was laid the principle was recognized, as a first step, that a knowledge not only of the Arabic knowledge but also of the Arabic idiom at the times of the Prophet was requisite for a proper understanding of the Qur'an.

Out of the many idioms used in the Qur'an only (18) have been identified and presented here:

1. *Ma malakat aiymanikum* (Qur'an 4:3, 4:24, 24:33, 30:28 etc.)

'Ma malakat aiymanikum' literally means 'whom your right hands possesses'. As an idiom, it refers to those who are under care and protection.

This idiom has a very wide connotation. By it are meant all those whose

care an individual is entrusted. It includes one's own children, orphans, captives, slaves, etc. It includes even animals and plants over which an individual has control.

2. *Nat-missa wujuhan'* and '*fa-na-rudduha adbariha* (Qur'an 4:47)

Literally, the phrases mean 'we obliterate some faces (or features) and turn them front to back'. Taking the literal meaning some translators have rendered the *ayah* as follows:

"O People of the Book! Believe in what We have sent down, confirming the Book with you before We deface some faces and turn (twist) them on their backs (hind-ward) as We cursed the people of the '*sabt*' and the decree of Allah is bound to be carried out." (Qur'an4: 47)

In fact, the above words are a combination of two different Arabic idioms. The first idiom: '*nat-missa wujuhan'* means 'We degrade (or humiliate and confront you with loss of honor)'. The second idiom: '*rudduha ala adbariha*' means 'We put to adversity, trial and tribulation.' In other words, it means 'We surround your very existence with '*adbaar*' i.e. affliction and distress'.

The famous exegete Syed Mohammed Rasheed Raza, Editor *Al-Minar*, Egypt, has also interpreted this *ayah* in the above meaning and stated that the turning faces hind-ward is metaphorical and conveys the meaning that 'they (the People of the Book) will be subjected to humiliation and degradation.' Rasheed Raza has quoted other exegetes in support of his contention. Sheikh Abduh was also of the same view.

Two other idioms: '*an-qalabtum ala a'qabikum*' (Qur'an3:144) and '*yarrudukum ala a'qabikum*' (Qur'an3:149) will help to understand the idioms under consideration. It may not be proper therefore, to take the literal meaning of the components of this idiom and to render it: "the faces of the infidels will be turned hind ward". The idiom '*anqalabtum ala a'qabikum*' is correctly rendered as follows:

Will you 'turn back on your heels'? (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Dr. Syed Abdul Latif, Marmaduke Pickthall etc) 'will you recant'? (Mahmud Y,Zayid).

"In the same way the idiom '*yarrudukum ala a'qabikum*' is also correctly rendered as follows: 'They will drive you back on your heels', (Abdullah Yudsuf Ali), 'drag you back to unbelief'? (Mahmud Y, Zayid).

3. *Suqita fi aidihim* (Qur'an7: 149)

This idiom is found in the following *ayah*: "Although (later), when they would smite their hands in remorse (*suqita fi aidihim*), having perceived that they have gone astray, they would say, 'indeed, unless our sustainer has mercy

on us and grant his forgiveness, we shall most certainly be among the lost!'" (Qur'an 7:149)

Literally the phrase '*suqita fi aidihim*' means: '(when it) was caused to fall in their hands or in front of them' or '(when it) was made to fall upon their hands.'

As an idiom it denotes intense remorse or repentance as a result of realization of the mistake.

"The phrase in Arabic means: they struck their hands upon their hands, by reasons of repentance; or repented greatly:....."¹

A person bites one's tongue or rubs' one hand against the other in self reproach. Similarly an Arab used to bite his hand in remorse. The idiom is derived from this custom. "An idiomatic phrase denoting intense remorse, probably derived from the striking (falling) of hand upon hand as expression of grief or regret".² The meanings are derived "because he who repents, and grieves, or regrets, bites his hands in sorrow, so that his hand is fallen upon his teeth".³

In case of an idiom it may not be correct to seek such a relationship with its components. If at all, the rendering of the figurative expression: 'when the consequences of their evil deeds came before them' will give a clue as to the meaning of the idiom.

In this idiom the basic idea is the realization of the error. The grief is but the result of such realization.

4. *Far al-Tanur* (Qur'an 11:40)

The phrase '*far al-tanur*' occurring in *ayaat* (Qur'an 11:40) and (23:27) is an idiom which should not be interpreted through each word of the phrase. '*Far*' literally means to gush. '*Tanur*' literally means an oven. If the words are taken literally, the phrase means 'the oven gushed over'.

Most of the exegetes and the translators have taken the words literally, and have come to the conclusion that the water actually gushed out through an oven (*tanur*).

'*Far al-tanur*' as an idiom means that the flood reached its highest peak. The use of the word oven is metaphorical to apply to the floods.

The word '*tanur*' is not used separately in the Qur'an. The word '*fawrihim*' is found in the Qur'an:

"Nay, but if you are patient in adversity and conscious of Him, and the enemy should fall upon you all of a sudden (*fawrihim*). Your Sustainer will aid

you with five thousand angels swooping down!" (Qur'an 03:125)

A phrase, '*awqadua naara lil-harbi*' (they ignite the fires of war) is also used in the Qur'an:

"...And so We have cast enmity and hatred among the followers of the Bible (to last) until Resurrection Day; every time they light the fires of war, Allah extinguishes them, and they labor hard to spread corruption on earth: And Allah does not love the spreaders of corruption." (Qur'an 05:64)

The Prophet used a phrase, '*alan hami ul-wateen*'. The word '*hami*' literally means to get hot. '*Wateen*' means battlefield. As an idiom, it means 'now the battle is at its peak'.

The idiom, '*far al-tanur*' is to be understood in the light of the above phrases.

Thus, the *ayaat* in question is to be rendered as follows:

"At length, Our decree (*amara*) came to pass and the floods reached the highest peak and then We said (to Prophet Nuh) carry into it..." (Qur'an 11:40).

"So, We inspired him (Nuh) make an ark under Our eyes and as We direct and when Our decree (*amara*) comes and when the flood reaches its highest peak and We said to Nuh carry into it....." (Qur'an 23:27)

5. '*Akhizu binasiyatiha*' (Qur'an 11:56)

'*Akhizu binasiyatiha*' literally means 'catch by the fore-lock.' It occurs in '*ayah*' 56 of *Surah Hud*. It is generally rendered as under:

"Behold, I have placed my trust in Allah, (who is) my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer: for there is no living creature which he does not hold by its forelock. Verily, straight is my Sustainer's way." (Qur'an 11:56)

As an idiom it means 'has complete control.' "When describing a person's humility and subjection to another person the ancient Arabs used to say 'The forelock of so and so is in the hand of so and so'.¹" "The idiom, in other words means 'He exercises an absolute power over it'. The idiom in Arabic, refers to a horse's forelock; the animal held in this manner being considered to be reduced to the lowest subjection. The moral is: everything, big or small, is in the firm grasp of God."²

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, describes it as "an Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's fore-lock. The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse, and for the horse the fore-lock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-assertion. So God's power over all creatures is unlimited and no

one can withstand his decree".³

Dragging (*lanasfa'n*) by the fore-lock is also used:

"And yet indeed if he does not desist We shall drag him 'by the forelock. '*(bin-naasiyah)*.'" (Qur'an 96:15)

"The fore-lock is on the forehead, and is thus symbolical of the summit and crown of the man's power or dignity. To be dragged by it is to suffer the worst of humiliation. '*Nasfa'an*' is a syncopated form of the emphatic first person plural".^[1]

6. *Zaqa bihim zara'n* (Qur'an 11:77)

'*zaqa bihim zara'n*' is a combination of two words '*zaqa*' meaning 'distressed or grieved' and '*zara'n*' meaning, 'stretching of arms.' Literal rendering of the components of the phrase will be; 'he was distressed as regards the stretching of his arms in their behalf.' As an idiom this phrase is found in classical Arabic to mean 'utterly unable to afford protection.'

In *ayah* 77 of *Surah Hud*, this idiom is used. The correct rendering of *theayah* will be as follows:

"And when Our messengers came to Lut, he was sorely grieved on their account (for) it was beyond his power to shield them. And he said: 'This is indeed, a dreadful day (for me)' " (Qur'an 11:77).

This idiom, in the above '*ayah*' denotes prophet Lut's inability to afford protection to his guests from the people of Sodom.

The embarrassment of prophet Lut on the arrival of the honorable messengers of Allah was quite understandable. They were handsome young men and prophet Lut felt certain that they will be sexually assaulted by his sinful countrymen and that he was helpless to protect them. The use of the idiom is very apt in the context.

7. *Atta khadhahu zihriyyan* (Qur'an 11:92)

This idiom is used in the following *ayah*:

"Said he (Prophet Lut): 'O my people! Do you hold my family in greater esteem than Allah? For, him you regard as something that may be cast behind you and be forgotten (*atta-khzzih-riyyaa*)' ". (Qur'an 11:92)

The words used in the *ayah* are '*attakhadha-tumuhu waraa' kum zihriyyan*.' In fact '*attakhadhahu zihriyyan*' is an idiom. The components of the idiom are separated, still the idiomatic use is very clear. "In classical Arabic usage, as well

as in the speech of certain bedouin tribes to this day, the phrase '*itta khadhahu*' (or '*ja'lahu zihriyyan*') (lit., 'he put him behind his back') has the meaning of 'he held him in contempt, or 'he forgot him,' or 'regarded him as something that may be forgotten.' --".¹

To fully appreciate the usage of the idiom the context of the *ayah* in question is to be understood. When prophet Shu'aib conveyed the Divine message, his people who understood only brute strength said: 'don't you see that we have all the power and influence, and you are only a teacher. Were it not for your family we should have stoned you, imprisoned you or treated you in a like manner. Thank us for our kindness that we spare you.

Prophet Shu'aib's reply to his people is contained in the *ayah* in question, which can be rendered as follows:

"He said: 'O my people! is then my family more to be honored by you than Allah Himself.? Will you relegate Him into the background, as if a thing deserving of neglect (or Him you regard as something that may be cast behind you and be forgotten.?) But verily my Lord knows fully well (every aspect of) all that you do.' " (Qur'an 11: 92)

8. Akhfiz janahaka (Qur'an 15:88 and 17:24)

The phrase '*akhfiz janahaka*' literally means 'lower the wings of humility.'

In the above *ayaat* it is used as an idiom meaning 'loving tenderness and humility.' The idiomatic usage is based on metonymical expression evocative of a bird that lovingly spreads its wings over its offspring's in the nest.

If the idiom is literally translated as 'lower thy wing' for the believers, as we find in some of the translations of the Quran (¹ ² ³ ⁴ etc.,) the depth of the intended meaning will be lost.

The above '*ayaat*' can be rendered as under:

"Do not vex yourself at the sight of what We have bestowed on some of them (who are employing it to thwart the Divine mission); and be not grieved on their account, but show tender affection to the faithful." (Qur'an 15:88)

"And defer to them in humility and tenderness and say, 'O our Lord! have compassion on them both, even as out of compassion they reared me from my child-hood.' " (Qur'an 17:24)

The use of this idiom is indicative that Allah wants us to observe nature and take lessons which are relevant to us. This particular idiom teaches us to observe bird life and see how the bird instinctively cares for and attends to the needs of the helpless, dependent offspring, The similarities of this attitude of

loving tenderness in two different situations is then explained. When the parents are old, infirm and dependent, one should attend to them with tender affection and should take special care of them. The believers are dependent on the prophet for his guidance through revelation and need his affectionate care. They are helpless as the offspring of the bird in the nest. It was only through the prophetic guidance with compassion that the believers grew in faith and achieved the status of '*ummatan wasata*.'

9. *Bakhailika wa rajilika* (Qur'an 17:64)

'Bakhailika wa rajilika' literally means 'your cavalry and your infantry.'

When 'Iblis' disobeyed Allah and refused to prostrate before Adam, Allah said to him:

"Lead to destruction those whom you can among them (*human beings*) with your (seductive) voice (then) make assault on them with all your might (*bakhailika wa rajilika*)....." (Qur'an 17:64)

As an idiom it means 'your forces'. "ie. collect all thy forces against them; use every means in thy power to seduce them."^[2] According to Muhammad Asad "This is an idiomatically established metaphor signifying 'with all thy might.'^[3] This idiom reminds the English phrase 'all the king's horses and all the king's men.'

The reference is to the 'satanic forces' or the "forcible assault of evil is next mentioned under the metaphor cavalry and infantry. It is when cajolery and tempting fair-seeming seem to fail that an attack is made in force with weapons of violence, of all kinds, like the different arms in an organized army."^[4]

10. *Ahlil uqadatan* (Qur'an 20:27)

As a phrase there are two components: *ahlil* and *uqadatun*. *Ahlil* means to loosen. *Uqadatun* means a knot. The phrase literally means 'to loosen or untie a knot.'

In the Qur'an this phrase is used as an idiom, which means to solve a problem.'

In some English translations the idiomatic use of '*ahlil uqadatun*' is not taken into consideration. We therefore, come across renderings such as: "And loose a knot from my tongue."^[5]

It is wrongly assumed that Prophet Musa had a defect in his tongue, caused by putting alive coal on his tongue when a child.

The assumption that Prophet Musa had a defect in his tongue and that he

stammered is based on the Old Testament:

“And Moses said unto the Lord, O’Lord! I am not eloquent -----but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” (Exodus 4:10)

The literal translation supports such assumptions. The prayer of Musa was to solve the problem of his speech (*lisani*) and not of the tongue.

11. *Ja’lnahum ahadith* (Qur’an 23:46 and 34:19) *Ja’lnahum salfan* (Qur’an 43:56)

‘*Ja’lnahum ahadith*’ literally means ‘we made them tales.’ Similarly ‘*ja’lnahum salfan*’ literally means ‘we made them a thing of the past.’ These are both idioms which mean, ‘we blotted them out.’

Through the narratives of the people of the past, the part they played and the end they met, the Qur’an frequently exhorts us to take lesson from history. The approach of the Qur’an with regard to history is epitomized in the *threeyaat* of *Surah Al-Asr*:

“By Time (*asr*) Verily man is in loss. Except such as have Faith and do righteous deeds and enjoin on each other truth (*haqq*) and enjoin on each other steadfastness (*sabr*).” (Qur’an 103: 1 to 3)

The Surah starts with a ‘swearing’. As we have seen (under ‘swearings’ in this study) the ‘swearings’ of the *Quran* are calls to witness.

It is to be noted that from the point of view of human beings, the time has three distinct phases viz. the past, the present and the future. The present which is just a moment and the future which is hidden from our eyes, cannot be called to witness. Obviously the reference is to the past which we know as history. Thus the rendering of the first *ayah* will be:

“History testifies that man is in loss.” (Qur’an 103:1)

Both the above idioms convey the message of the Qur’an: those men or nations which persisted in evil doing were blotted out from memory and were replaced by other people:

“For, how many a community that persisted in evil doing have We dashed into fragments, and raised another people in its stead.” (Qur’an 21:11)

This message is forcefully conveyed through the above idioms.

For the full appreciation of the above idioms the understanding of the following similar phrases will be helpful:

1. *Ja’lnahum hasidan khamidin*.

This phrase occurs in (Qur’an 21:15)

“They (the evil doers) said ‘Ah woe to us! we were indeed wrong doers.’ and that cry of theirs did not cease until We caused them to become (like) field mown down, still and silent as ashes.” (Qur’an 21:14)

Here the treatment mooted out to evil doers is mentioned in the above phrase in which two metaphors are closely knit together. The evil doers were caused to become (like) ‘a mown field’, which is again compared to ‘extinguished ashes’. The phrase ‘*ja’lnahum hasidan khamidin*’ thus means, ‘We made them extinct.’

2. *Faja’lnahum ghusha’un*

We find this phrase in the following *ayah*:

“Then Our scourge overtook them in all justice (as promised) and We reduced them into smithereens (rubbish of dead leaves); cast off be the wrong doing people.” (Qur’an 23:41)

3. *Faja’lnahu haba’un manshura*

The phrase finds place in this *ayah*:

“For We shall have turned towards all the (supposedly good) deeds they ever did (In this life) and shall have transformed such deeds into scattered dust.” (Qur’an 25:23)

“The false hopes they built on in this life, and the deeds they did under the shadow of such false hopes will be dissipated as if they were dust flying about in the wind. They will have no value whatever.”^[6]

4. *Ja’lna lilnaas ayat*

The Qur’an has used this phrase in the following ‘*ayah*’:

“And as to the people of Nuh,----when they rejected the apostles, We drowned them, and We made them an example (*ayat*) for all mankind.....” (25:37)

5. *Fa ja’lnahum ka’sfin makul*

The phrase is used in this *ayah*:

“Then He rendered them (*the Abyssinians*) like stubble devoured (by cattle).” (Qur’an 105:5)

12. *Adkhal yadaka fi jebaka* (Qur'an 27:12)

'*Adkhal yadaka fi jebaka*' literally means 'place (or enter) your hand into (the folds of your) robe. 'Jeb' "is an 'opening at the neck and bosom of a shirt and the like."^[7] As far as the physical act is concerned it may be noted that, "Moses had a loose-fitting robe. If he put his hand within the folds of the robe, it would go to his bosom on the side of his body opposite to that from which his hand came ie. if it was his right hand it would go to the left side of his bosom."^[8] The phrase is an idiom meaning, 'glance into your inner self.'^[9]

When Prophet Musa was ordered to convey the Divine Message to Firaun and his people:

"... Go unto those wicked people, the people of Firaun, who refuse to be conscious of Me". (Qur'an 26:10, 11)

Prophet Musa felt diffident, for he had undesignedly killed an Egyptian. He was afraid that Firaun and his people may kill him as they had a charge of crime against him:

"And (further), they (the Firaun and his people) have a charge of crime against me; and I fear they may slay me". (Qur'an 26:14)

Referring to this fear in the mind of Prophet Musa Allah consoled him:

"But if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of evil, truly I am oft forgiving most merciful". (Qur'an 27:11)

At this stage and to further encourage Prophet Musa Allah said:

"Now put your hand into the bosom of your shirt it will come forth white (and shining) without any blemish "(Qur'an 27:12).

We find the same instructions in the following *ayaat*:

"Now draw your hand close to your side: It shall come forth white (and shining) without any blemish (or stain) as another sign". (Qur'an 20:22)

"Put your hand inside the bosom of your shirt (*jaybika*). It will come forth white (and shining) without any blemish". (Qur'an 28: 32)

In this *ayah* he is reassured: 'glance into your inner self you will find yourself to be without any blemish'.

The beauty of the Qur'an is that while maintaining the narrative the Qur'an has used an idiom "*Yadaka fi jaybika*". The dictionary meaning of its components are not to be taken literally. The purport of this idiom is: you need not have any sense of guilt. You are not at fault. Peep into your inner self and you will find that you have clean hands and free of any blemish.

According to the general belief, one of the miracles bestowed on Prophet Musa was, whenever he drew out his hand from the folds of the garments on

his breast, it came out white and radiant with transcendent luminosity which was puzzling to the Firaun and his people.

This is one of the examples where the Qur'an has borrowed the narratives from the Bible, but presented it with its unique wisdom (*hikmah*). No miracle is described.

In the Biblical story miracle part is stressed which probably is mainly due to later corruptions introduced into the Biblical text during its translation.

“And the Lord said furthermore unto him (Moses) put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow”. (Exodus IV-6)

Our exegetes have retained the miracle part and interpreted that white (shining) hand was not a sign of any disease, leprosy or something loathsome, but on the contrary, the hand of Prophet Musa came out shining with a divine light.

To appreciate the wisdom of the Qur'an which is so beautifully explained, it is necessary to know the context in which this particular 'phenomenon' is described in the Qur'an.

13. Taqta-unnas-sabiil (Qur'an 29:29)

We find this idiom in the following *ayah*. Prophet Lut asked his people:

“Must you indeed approach men (*with lust*) and thus 'cut across the way' (*taqta-'unnas-sabiil*) (of nature),” (Qur'an 29:29).

Sabiil literally means the track. *Taqta Unnas* means to cut across diagonally.

'*Taqtaunnas sabiil*' is an idiom meaning 'cut across the way of nature' i.e., to adopt a course which is against the beaten track. Qur'an says about Prophet Lut that he admonished his people that they committed lewdness which no people ever committed.

Some commentators render the idiom as 'cutting of the highway' and interpret it to refer to highway robberies. According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali; “It is also possible that the crimes in their assemblies may have been injustice, rowdiness, etc., But the context seems to refer to their own special horrible crime, and the point here seems to be that they were not ashamed of it, and that they practised it publicly”.¹ It may however, not be correct to interpret the phrase by taking literal meaning of the components. There is a similar expression, '*taqattiu arhamakum*' (Qur'an 47:22) meaning to cut asunder or to violate the ties of kinship. Similarly Qur'an has used '*sa' sabila*' (evil way) (Qur'an 17:32) for adultery and '*ibnas sabeel*' (son of the road) (Qur'an

2:177) for way-farer.

This idiom is most appropriate to explain the sex perversion. The horrible and un-speakable sexual crimes of the people of Sodom were against the law of nature.

Muhammad Asad has translated the *ayah* as follows:

“Must you indeed approach men (with lust), and thus cut across the way (of nature) and must you commit these shameful deeds in your (open) assemblies? “[\[10\]](#)

Some commentators are of the opinion that ‘*taqtaunnas sabil*’ means robbery and concluded that the people of Prophet Lut suffered from three evils namely sex perversion, highway robbery and committing evil deeds openly in assemblies. In fact ‘*taqtaunnas sabil*’ is not robbery. Similarly committing evil deeds in open assemblies is referred to as ‘*taqtaunnas sabil*’.

14. *Qasraatut tarfi* (37:48 and 38:52)

‘*Qasraatut tarfi*’ literally means ‘mates who restrain their gaze’ ie. they are modest and have eyes only for their mates. As an idiom it applies to the righteous of both sexes who in the life to come will be rejoined with those whom they loved and whom they were loved in this world.

This idiom is found in the following *ayah*.

“And with them (Allah’s true servants) will be mates of ‘modest gaze’ (*qasirraatut-tarfi*) (of large lustrous) eye”. (Qur’an 37:48).

15. *Wantalaqul mala’* (Qur’an 38:6)

‘*Wantalaqul mala’*’ literally means ‘the leaders among them freed (themselves)’ When some one is being addressed, courtesy demands that he should listen patiently, whether or not he agrees to what is said. As an idiom ‘*antalaqul mala’*’ most appropriately points to the incident when the Quraish chiefs invited for a conference left abruptly (or staged a walk out) thus getting themselves free of the moral obligation.

16. *Bu’d al-mashriqayn* (Qur’an 43:38)

‘*Bu’d al-mashriqayn*’ literally means ‘distance of two easts.’ Idiomatically it means the distance of the two extremes. Two opposites ---- or two conceptually disconnected entities ----- are referred to implying that they would never meet. This idiomatic usage is frequent in classical Arabic. “A good equivalent idiom in English would be ‘poles apart’, for they could never meet.”[\[11\]](#)

To fully appreciate the force of this idiom, a close study of the underlying idea is necessary.

The rendering of the revelant *ayaat* is as follows:

“And whoso shall blind himself from remembrance of the Most Gracious, to him We assign an (enduring) evil impulse (*sheytan*) to become his companion (or other self)” (Qur’an 43:36 and 37).

The rendering of the *ayah* in question is as follows:

“At length when (such a one) appears before Us, he will say (to his companion, *sheytan*, O sheytan!) Would that between you and me there was an uncoverable distance (bu’d al-mashriqayn). Ah, an evil companion.” (Qur’an 43:38)

The term ‘*sheytan*’, “Often denotes in the Qur’an a force or influence remote from, and opposed to, all that is true and good (*Taj al-Arus, Raghib*)”.^[12]

The use of the idiom in the *ayah* in question makes it clear that there cannot be a compromise between the ‘*siraat al-mustaqim*’ and the ‘crooked ways’. Through the use of this idiom the Qur’an impresses the idea that “the haqq is haqq and the *batil* is *batil* and never the twain shall meet.”

17. *Yukshafu a’n saaqin* (Qur’an 68:42)

This idiom occurs in *ayah* 42 of ‘*Surah*’ *Al- Qalam* which is generally rendered as under:

“Remember the Day whereon the shank (shin bone) shall be bared, and they (human beings) shall be called upon to prostrate themselves, but they shall not be able to prostrate.” (Qur’an 68:42)

‘*Yukshafu a’n saaqin*’ literally means ‘shin bone shall be bared.’ As an idiom it means that the reality shall dawn upon them, or that the calamity shall approach as a hard fact, to be faced with all its humiliations and sufferings. Man in his ignorance, arrogance and insolence continues to indulge in disobedience of the Divine Law but one day he shall have to face the naked reality as the inevitable consequence of his actions. On that Day all the mysteries will vanish and there will be no way out for those who rejected faith.

“The implication is that their erstwhile claim that whatever is ‘expedient’ is morally justifiable shall be revealed in all its nakedness namely, as something indefensible and spiritually destructive.”¹

‘Make bare the leg’ as indicative of ‘facing the inevitable’ is found in the

Old Testament:

“Take the millstones and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers”. (Isaiah 47:2)

18. *Tabbat yada* (Qur'an 111:1)

‘*Tabbat yada*’ literally means his hands are broken. As an idiom it means ‘he is rendered incapable of confrontation.’ Breaking of one’s hands amount to making a person incapable of defending himself.

This idiom is used in *Surah* 111. As Abdul Uzza son of Abdul Muttalib was the ‘*mutawalli*’ of *Kaaba* the Qur’an made him a symbol representing the entire system which opposed the Prophet and his mission. Abdul Uzza was made a symbol also because in his fiery hot temperament, he represented the general temperament of the opponents of Islam.

In *Surah* 111 this idiom ‘*tabbat yada*’ is used as a prediction to declare the breakdown of the system represented by Abdul Uzza, it was no more capable of opposing Islam.

Aphorism

“A proverb, maxim, or aphorism is a short concisely expressed principle, rule of conduct or a statement of general and well known self evident fact in common usage, expressed in appropriate and effective language. It is a proposition whose truth is so evident at first sight, that no process of reasoning or demonstration can make it plainer. It is a pithy, terse and pointed expression in a single sentence containing some important precept or truth acceptable to one and all. It is a brief reflection of plain, wise saying, short instructive remark or rule of conduct that sinks into the heart.”¹

An aphorism has the potential of becoming a proverb.

The Qur’an abounds in excellent moral suggestions and precepts.

It can be said that the Qur’an is full of aphorisms. In *Surah An- najm* (53) alone, not less than 11 aphorisms are found, from *ayah* 38 to *ayah* 50, in succession.

The Qur’an has its own method of the presentation of Truth---- the method, namely, of direct and pithy statements of profound simplicity. These apphorisms carry within their bosom the beauty, the grace and the force of the profound simplicity of nature which move men and nations to action---- for the promotion of godliness in all its forms.

In ancient Arabia oral literature mostly consisted of poetry and to some extent of rhymed prose (*saj*). In the earliest form of rhymed prose we find

proverbs or aphorisms. In Arabic literature collections of saws and proverbs is known as '*majallah*'. If aphorisms in the Qur'an are also found in Bible or in post biblical Hebrew or Aramaic, it cannot be surmised that they are borrowed from biblical literature. This only shows that the original Divine text of the Bible is preserved at least to that extent. It also shows the unity and universality of world literature. It is also true that the Arabic proverbs shared much in common with proverbs in other world languages.

A selection of 68 aphorisms of the Qur'an is presented here.

1. "Lead us on to the straight path. "(Qur'an 1:5)
2. "Deaf, dumb, blind (to all intents and purposes), they will not return (to the right path)"(Qur'an 2:18)
3. ".....Allah encircles the disbelievers "(Qu'ran 2:19)
4. ".....Verily Allah has power over all things "(Qur'an 2:20)
5. ".....and speak fair to the people" (Qur'an 2:83)
6. ".....Verily Allah is with those who are steadfast in patience. "(Qur'an 2:153)
7. "....To Allah we belong, and to Him we are to return." (Qur'an 2:156)
8. ".....For tumult and oppression are worse than blood-shed" (Qur'an 2:191)
9. "There shall be no compulsion in '*Deen*' (religion)....." (Qur'an 2:256)
10. "Allah burdens not any one greater than he can bear....." (Qur'an 2:286)
11. "Every one shall taste death" (Qur'an 3:185)
12. "..... And Allah is enough for a helper "(Qur'an 4:45)
13. ".....and fear (keep your duty to) Allah. Verily Allah is severe in punishment." (Qur'an 5:2)
14. " The life of the world is nothing but a pastime and a sport....." (Qur'an 6:32)
15. ".....The command (the final word) rests with none but Allah..... "(Qur'an 6:57)
16. ".....Our Lord! (Rubb) Grant us consistency (in faith) and make us die as

Muslims (men committed to You) “(Qur’an 7:126)

17. “There is no victory except from (the help of) Allah”. (Qur’an 8:10)
18. “Sorrow not; be certain that Allah is with us.....” (Qur’an 9:40)
19. “There is no change in the words (law, principles) of Allah.....” (Qur’an 10:64)
20. “I only wish to reform you to the extent I can.....” (Qur’an 11:88)
21. “And Allah has every power to carry out His purpose” (Qur’an 12:21)
22. “And over all (those) endowed with knowledge, there is One the All Knowing.” (Qur’an 12:76)
23. “And with Him everything is set according to a plan (a measure) “(Qur’an 13:8)
24. “but ‘lower your wing’ (be gentle and give full attention) to the believers.” (Qur’an 15:88)
25. “And to Him ceaseless devotion is due (ie. His Law is for ever).....” (Qur’an 16:52)
26. “man is most ungrateful.” (Qur’an 17:67)
27. “Your Sustainer (*Rubb*) is gracious (most forgiving), full of compassion.....” (Qur’an 18:58)
28. “This is the straight path (siraat-al-mustaqim).” (Qur’an 19:36)
29. “for, Allah is the best and the eternal (everlasting)” (Qur’an 20:73)
30. “Closer and closer to mankind comes their reckoning.....” (Qur’an 21:1)
31. “for verily Allah is never unjust to His servants.” (Qur’an 22:10)
32. “Blessed then be Allah, the Most Excellent of Makers (Creators).” (Qur’an 23:14)
33. “this is (indeed) a most serious slander.” (Qur’an 24:16)
34. “The Day when neither wealth nor sons shall avail.” (Qur’an 26:88)

35. "And it (the Qur'an) is certainly a guidance and mercy for the believers." (Qur'an 27:77)
36. ".....That which is (ie. remains) with Allah is better (in value) and more lasting....." (Qur'an 28:60)
37. " We have enjoined on man (to show) kindness to his parents....." (Qur'an 29:8)
38. "..... Sheerk (setting up peers to Allah) is indeed the grievous impropriety." (Qur'an 31:13)
39. ".....And He is full of mercy to the believers." (Qur'an 33:43)
40. ".....He (man) was (proved to be) a tyrant and ignorant." (Qur'an 33:72)
41. "And upon us (prophets devolves) nothing but plain conveyance (of the message)" (Qur'an 36:16)
42. " Your Lord (Ilah) is surely one." (Qur'an 37:4)
43. ".....There is no ilah (worthy of worship) except Allah....." (Qur'an 37:35)
44. "Despair not of the mercy of Allah....." (Qur'an 39:53)
45. ".....And that indeed will be a great achievement." (Qur'an 40:9)
46. ".....There is nothing whatever like Him....." (Qur'an 42:11)
47. "Allah created the heavens and the earth in right form (for just ends)....." (Qur'an 45:22)
48. ".....Thus Allah coins (strikes out) similitudes for men." (Qur'an 47: 3)
49. "Indeed We have granted you a manifest victory." (Qur'an 48:1)
50. ".....The noblest (most honorable)of you in the sight of Allah is he who is pious (best in conduct)" (Qur'an 49:13)
51. ".....We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein". (Qur'an 50:16)
52. "And the (day of) judgment (justice) must indeed come to pass." (Qur'an 51:6)
53. "That man shall have nothing other than what he strives for." (Qur'an

53:39)

54. "Is the reward for good (*ihsan*) other than good (*ihsan*)?" (Qur'an 55:60)
55. "None touches (or will touch) it (the Qur'an) except the clean (at heart)" (Qur'an 56:79)
56. ".....He (Allah) is with you wherever you may be" (Qur'an 57:4)
57. ".....Help from Allah and the victory (which is) near." (Qur'an 61:13)
58. ".....And Allah is the best of the providers (of all needs)" (Qur'an 62:11)
59. ".....Allah is fully aware of the secrets of (all) hearts." (Qur'an 64:4)
60. "And bear with patience what they (the unbelievers) utter....." (Qur'an 73:10)
61. "And (Allah) made the day for (earning) livelihood". (Qur'an 78:11)
62. "(Then) every one shall know what he has brought forth." (Qur'an 81:14)
63. "There is no individual but has (Allah as) Protector over him." (Qur'an 86:4)
64. "We have indeed created man in the best of forms." (Qur'an 95:4)
65. "(Allah) taught man what (otherwise) he knew not." (Qur'an 96:4)
66. "Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it" (Qur'an 99:7)
67. "Verily man is in a state of loss." (Qur'an 103:2)
68. "To you be your Way (*Deen*) and to me my own (*Deen*)" (Qur'an 109:6)

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- ^[4] Ali, Allama Abdullah Yusuf - The Holy Qur'an text translation and Commentary. Note 2256.
- ^[5] Daryabadi, Abdul Majid --- Holy Qur'an. Page 506
- ^[6] Ali, Abdullah Yusuf ----- The Holy Qur'an - English translation of the meanings and commentary. Note 3080 page 931.
- ^[7] Daryabadi, Abdul Majid ---- Holy Qur'an Arabic text with translation and commentary in English. Note 402, *Surah* 27, page 605.
- ^[8] Ali, Abdullah Yusuf ----- The Holy Qur'an - English Translation of the meanings and commentary. Note 3249.
- ^[9] Abdul Fazl, Mirza ----- Ghareeb al Qur'an (Dictionary of the Qur'an, Arabic ----- Urdu) Hyderabad 1947. page 71
- ¹ Ali, Abdullah Yusuf ----- The Holy Qur'an - English translation of the meanings and commentary. Note 3450
- ^[10] The religion of Islam, A comprehensive Discussion of the source Principles and Practices of Islam. Page 610
- ^[11] Ali, Abdullah Yusuf ----- The Holy Qur'an - English translation of the meanings and commentary. Note 4641
- ^[12] Asad, Muhammad ----- the Message of the Qur'an. Note 16, Surah 15 page 384.

¹ Asad, Muhammad ----- The message of the Qur'an. Note 21, *Surah* 68 page 886.

¹ Author's - An Easy Way to Understanding of the Qur'an. Part II p. 11.

CHAPTER - 5

CAPTIVATING AYAAT, WORDS AND NAMES

Preamble

The Muslim mind will always endeavor to understand the meaning of the Qur'an. This exercise is an attempt to know the unknown or the less known. The fascinating exercise to understand the Divine intention is an unending process. It will certainly open new vistas of understanding for those who make this effort. Without this curiosity, it is impossible to penetrate the depths of meaning in the Qur'an.

The Muslim *Ummah* from the beginning endeavored to understand the Qur'an and laid the foundation of the valuable exegetic literature.

The efforts of the medieval exegetes are undoubtedly worthy of respect. It is necessary to acknowledge their valuable services; but some of them have written things which cannot be easily accepted. The level of their understanding of the Qur'an may have been high in their own time; but it is obvious that their commentaries cannot be a comparison to the word of Allah. For various reasons, throughout the centuries, some of the realities of the Qur'an were obscured from the eyes of the people, which gradually it led to a very low level of the understanding of the Qur'an. This decline occurred not only in the understanding of the Qur'anic meaning, but also in other areas of Qur'anic knowledge.

With the advancement of knowledge in modern times, new questions have arisen not only about fundamental beliefs like *tawhid* (monotheism), Prophethood and life in the hereafter, but historical, circumstantial, geographical, and research oriented issues have also been brought under review and investigation. The human mind is now more aware of the secrets of the universe. The chronology and periods of the various Prophets of Allah have been historically determined. In modern times the responsibility of the exegetes is much greater than it was in the past. The Qur'an is being challenged from different quarters, and the exegetes have to be more cautious than before in various ways.

When the Qur'an does not say anything without reason and foundation, where is the justification for the exegetes saying things that are contrary to reason and established facts?

It is not a service, but a dis-service to the Qur'an to link its *ayaat* with unscientific and irrational details.

As observed by some renowned Muslim scholars: Their writings contain many details which do not appeal to modern mind.

"The path of the reader has to be made smoother and easier than it has hitherto been under the guidance of learned commentators of the old school. For it may be said without dis-respect that those who professed deep knowledge of it, seem to have often gone a little off the field --- some of them indeed have soared away into the clouds of metaphysical dissertation, leaving their disciples bewildered on the earth below".¹

The fact has to be noted that the interpretations offered by the earlier commentators are not divine. It should also be noted that their efforts suffered from their own personal limitations as well as the limitations of their times. They also suffered, to some extent, from sectarian and doctrinal differences. Some interpretations have percolated from the apocryphal '*tafsir*' literature into these medieval orthodox commentaries. It cannot be claimed about the greatest exegete that in spite of the limitations of his human mind, he has explained an *ayah* of the Qur'an exactly in the manner which is in accordance with the intention of Allah. It is perhaps, not possible to claim that the *tafsir* literature is most authoritative, authentic and unanimous. These commentaries, in general, reflected medieval thinking and the Qur'anic meanings, at times, are allowed to be exposed to some of the idiosyncrasies of medieval interpretations. "Dr Iqbal has pointed out that some of the early Muslim scholars interpreted the Qur'an in the light of the Greek philosophy. Almost two hundred years later it dawned upon them that the spirit of Islam was totally against this philosophy as well as Greek Mythology. Similarly, when the Muslims conquered Iran, the conquerors were influenced by the Persian civilization and philosophy. The Greek and Persian (*ajami*) influences, thus adversely affected the interpretation of the Qur'an relegating it from an open bright book from on high into the arena of mysterious scriptures".¹

The Muslim *Ummah* in general, is still unable to purge its mind of the medieval influences which have wrapped its outlook and mentality. This amounts to containing the Qur'anic teachings in 'medieval bondage' as observed by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif.²

Says Abdul Majid Daryabadi: "No exegesis can be considered as the last word. The Qur'an is greater than even the greatest exegete. An exegesis is after all a human effort. Some scholars commit the mistake of regarding the Qur'an and the commentaries on it as one and the same thing." ³

Some medieval interpretations make Islam look as an out-moded way of life unsuited to the ever changing demands of time. Some commentaries have

loosely stated that a certain statement, in a particular *ayah*, is open to two possible interpretations, or that a Qur'anic word can be interpreted in two ways.⁴ It is wrongly assumed that it does not have one, fixed, original meaning but rather can mean many things at once.

Some exegetes hold the view that the Qur'an is a so rich book that it would be improper to limit the number of variant interpretations of its words and passages to one. They often offer a whole list of possible meanings without venturing to offer their own considered opinion. Thus the main theme of a passage remains hidden behind their lengthy discourse. It is the Qur'an which must speak and not the interpreter.

This is not to suggest that we should either deny or reject the findings of the exegetes. Only we should not accept them uncritically as authority figures. They were products of their time and environment and the resulting weaknesses should be recognised. Their contributions remain substantial, but cannot be treated as primary knowledge.

In the Qur'anic studies we find two extreme approaches. The Qarmatians, and more particularly the Ismailis, as long back as early tenth century, perhaps with the intention to distort the teachings of the Qur'an, created a theory that the Qur'anic *ayaat* multaneously contain two layers of meaning and that each and every *ayah* of the Qur'an has both an external literal meaning and an inner esoteric meaning and that, the inner meaning alone, as interpreted by the *Imam* or his representative, is to be accepted. A flood of inner meanings for simple and clear Qur'anic words were offered by various preachers.

The interpretations of the Qur'anic *ayaat* called '*tawil*'. According to Dr. Zahid Ali (d. June 1953) such interpretations are fabricated and concocted. There was no unanimity among the Ismaili and the Qarmatian preachers even regarding the alleged or supposed inner meanings. Moreover, there was no relation at all between the apparent (obvious) meanings and the inner meanings. These supposed meanings interpreted by the Ismailis were at times illogical and mostly contradictory to each other. For example, some Ismailis have interpreted the word '*salat*' as Prophet Muhammad (S) and '*wadhu*' as Ali. Just like '*salat*' cannot be performed without '*wadhu*', acceptance of apostleship of Prophet Muhammad (S) is not possible without accepting Ali as his '*wasi*' they argued.¹

There are hundreds of such interpretations all contrary to each other, and all without any etymological or rational justification.

As a reaction to this erroneous and dangerous approach, the orthodox Muslim scholars took the stand that the apparent meanings of the Qur'anic words alone should be accepted. This approach, although in reaction to the Ismaili approach, was by itself not quite realistic. This

resulted in taking the literal meaning of the terms, idioms, or even the figurative expressions of the Qur'an. It is therefore quite necessary and logical, therefore, to adopt a realistic middle way.

There is a consensus of opinion among the exegetes that preference has to be given to the meaning which are apparent in the context. Only in case where the context does not allow the apparent meaning, the implied meaning will be accepted. For example, there are *ayaat* in the Qur'an wherein there is a mention of Allah's hand (Quran 48:10) , Allah's face (Quran 28; 88) and Allah's cable (Quran 3; 103) etc. In all such *ayaat*, it is not possible to take the apparent and literal meanings. The obvious meanings will have to be taken, in which case, the apparent meanings will have to be ignored.

The *ayaat* of the Qur'an are explicit and unambiguous. It has also been claimed that the Qur'an is inerrant: it can contain no errors of fact and its text is unalterable. That the Qur'an is coherent: each part agrees with all the other parts. It forms a harmonious, interlocking text. The Quran is not polyvalent. The teachings of the Qur'an are simple, plain and easy to understand and to act upon. It has been claimed and rightly so, that the Qur'an is free from un-intelligibility. There is no vagueness, inconsistency, incongruity or obliquity therein: There is, a vast difference between a particular *ayah* (or word) of the Qur'an being un-intelligible and the concept being un-intelligible to human mind due to human limitations.

Islam advocates fair and open dealings and condemns secrecy. There is therefore, nothing like concealed or hidden meaning of the Qur'an. There is no esoteric or interior meaning of Qur'anic *ayaat*. There are no cabalistic teachings in the Qur'an. Meaning which is hidden, transcending human comprehension and applying to theories for which no rational account can be given, is called mystic meaning. It is designed for an inner circle of disciples. Even some erudite Qur'anic scholars say regarding certain passages of the Qur'an that they contain mystic meaning. For example, we come across observations such as "Another glorious passage full of meaning both obvious and mystic and " There is much mystic doctrine here, explained by beautiful metaphor and illustrations".¹ In my humble opinion mystic meaning is inconsistent with the very character of the Qur'an, which is a plain book, whose approach is direct.

I am convinced that every *ayah* of the Qur'an conveys one and only one meaning. It is also equally true of the words used in the Qur'an that they bear, in a particular context, only one meaning. Similarly, every name mentioned in the Qur'an denotes only one person, place or thing. However, we come across divergent interpretations in various translations and commentaries of the Qur'an. When such is the case, it is but natural that one should try his best to reach out for the real meaning, the only interpretation which is the divine intent, out of the diverge interpretations. Such an effort no doubt will be most rewarding but it will, have all the limitations of a human endeavor to

interpret the Divine message.

Such an effort, however, appears to be necessary as it will promote better and deeper understanding of the Qur'an. The main objective is to provide material which will enable the reader to achieve a more than superficial understanding of the Qur'an and to draw his own conclusions therefrom.

The classical commentaries of the Qur'an were mostly written before the fourteenth century A.D. Subsequently commentators mostly repeated what the earlier ones had said. A period of imitation started. It cannot therefore, be denied that the voluminous exegesis repeat almost every interpretation and even divergent and conflicting views of the earlier exegetes. These different explanations have given rise to the specialized study called '*mushkilat-al-Qur'an*'. The word '*mushkilat*' is derived from the root '*shakala*' meaning, 'to be similar' or having close resemblance to each other. This word assumed the meaning of 'uncertain', (close resemblance gave rise to doubts as to which is the real meaning).

Thus '*mushkilat-al-Qur'an*' is a study of Qur'anic *ayaat*, which convey different or alternative meanings, very similar to each other, and to suggest the probable meaning according to the preference of the author. Eminent scholars have made indepth studies and have explained various *ayaat* of the Qur'an in greater detail. They have made an invaluable contribution, which deserves to be gratefully acknowledged. I am, however, convinced that there is no '*ishkal*' or ambiguity whatsoever, in any *ayah* of the Qur'an. It is only our own lack of understanding which has given rise to different and conflicting interpretations. In my opinion, therefore, '*captivating ayaat, words and names*' is the most appropriate expression for such a study.

It cannot be denied that studies of '*mushkilat-al-Qur'an*' are more important than traditional exegesis. Proceeding on these lines, I found some of the *ayaat*, (words and names) in the Qur'an fascinating and inviting special attention. In interpreting these *ayaat*, or words, I found differences of opinion among the translators, as well as, the exegetes. An indepth study proved to be self-rewarding, enlightening and opened new vistas.

For the real understanding of the *ayaat* and words of the Qur'an dictionary meanings are an important source. We have also to bear in mind the fact that most of the books on grammar and dictionaries in Arabic were prepared during the early Abbasid period under the patronage of Dailamies and Ismailites. Their purpose was perhaps to distort the teachings of the Qur'an. Therefore, the books on grammar and dictionaries cannot be regarded as entirely reliable. It is important to bear in mind that the Qur'an is the final authority as against the dictionaries and grammars in Arabic language. The Arabic dictionaries and books on grammar are not the final authority as

against the Qur'an.

Muslims propagated the Qur'anic teachings very liberally in the territories they conquered. But another side to this openness of mind was that converts from earlier religions undertook the task of exegesis and other Qur'anic knowledge, and their past beliefs, superstitions and to some extent their anti Islamic sentiments undoubtedly had some influence on their writings. When the period of imitation (*taqlid*) started, these things became a part of the later exegesis and were considered as authentic.

When the Qur'an was revealed, its earliest followers accepted it without any difficulty. They needed neither an exegesis nor those eighteen sciences which were later considered essential for the understanding of the Qur'an.

Every student of linguistics knows that the use of language has been influenced by commentaries on facts and events. The Arabic language was much influenced by these commentaries written in the Abbasid period. The essence of the Islamic mind was relegated to the background during this period and non-Arab influences had permeated all minds. Non-Arabs adopted the Arabic language, but mostly retained their own alien concepts. In this way, the Arabic language became the means for expression of non-Arab concepts and beliefs. Many important books were written in Arabic during this period, but the Arabic words no longer had the meaning which they had in the minds of the Muslims when the Qur'an was revealed.

Nowadays, the Qur'an is mostly understood with the help of the exegeses which are the product of minds with a non-Arab (*ajami*) orientation. These exegeses are the creations of an environment in which Muslims were no longer close to the Qur'an. This distancing from the Qur'an has been caused by the imitative interpretations which have been prevalent among Muslims for a long time. In most cases the meanings of Qur'anic words are the product of non-Arab concepts.

An attempt has been made to discuss interpretations of 30 *ayaat*, and 46 words from the Qur'an and the most plausible and reasonable interpretations are offered according to my best understanding. I am fully aware of my short-comings, but assure the readers that the study is the outcome of a sincere and un-biased approach.

The results of this humble and sincere endeavour are being presented with the fervent hope that they will be helpful to the Qur'anic scholars even if they differ. It is but by the grace and blessings of Allah that I have been able to take up this study.

To discuss theological controversies or to enter into polemical arguments, has been considered outside the scope of the present study. I am, however, confident that the present discussions will act as an

incentive for further study.

A. CAPTIVATING AYAAT

1. *Ayah* 1:1

Bismillah-hir-Rahman-nir-Rahim is usually regarded as an auspiciatory *ayah* or formula of initiation and is recited before embarking upon any work, secular or religious. It is sometimes translated as "I commence in the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate." In almost all the Urdu translations the sense of commencing in the name of Allah is expressed. In actuality, however, there is no word in this *ayah* which can be rendered as 'commencing'. Commencing can only be used by implication with the preconceived notion that this formula is exclusively recited when some task is to be undertaken. The real significance of this *ayah* is to let the reader know that what is being conveyed has the authority of Allah, who is *Al-Rahman* and *Al-Rahim*. This expression can be understood with a similar expression: *Iqra bisme Rabikkal lazi Khalaqa* (Qur'an 96:1). In *ayah* 96:1 *Bisme Rabbika* has got the same meaning as *Bismillah*. The Prophet is enjoined to proclaim in the name of the Sustainer.

2. *Ayah* 1:2

Al-Hamd means praise, gratitude, or obedience. *Al-Hamd Lillah* means 'all praise is due to Him alone to whom everyone is duty bound in obedience' According to the eminent exegete, Tabari, the meaning of the phrase is 'thanks are exclusively for Allah'. According to another great exegete, Fakhruddin Razi '*hamd*' means gratitude for the bounties of Allah. According to Ibn Kathir also it is an expression of gratitude directed purely to Allah.¹ The word represents the feelings of gratitude and obedience which are for Allah alone. In the entire creation of Allah, man is endowed with the faculty of speech. His duty towards Allah in addition to obedience is to hymn his personal praise and to express the feelings of gratitude in words:

"Whenever we praise someone, we do so for two reasons: First, because excellence calls for praise, irrespective of whether that excellence has any direct relevance to us or not. Second we praise one whom we consider to be a benefactor; when this is the case our praise arises from a deep feeling of gratitude. God is worthy of praise on both counts. It is incumbent on us to praise Him not only in recognition of His infinite excellence but also because our feeling of gratitude to Him, arising from our awareness of the blessings He lavished upon us".¹

'*Al-hamdu Lillah*' is followed by the words '*Rabil A'lamin*' (the Lord of all domains of existence).² This makes it very clear that *Al-Hamd* stands for the expression of gratitude. In all the English translations, '*hamd*' is rendered as praise. The translators are partly true. They look like using the term *al-*

hamd exclusively in the sense of praise implying that Allah has, so to say, an allurement for sychophancy.

“*Hamd* is not only praise but it also implies admiration; and it implies the magnifying or honoring of the object thereof; and lowliness, humility, or submissiveness in the person who offers it.”³

In this *ayah*, as well as in several other passages, the meaning of the word ‘*hamd*’ is obedience, arising for a deep sense of gratitude. Allah alone is entitled to claim absolute obedience.

In commenting on *Surah Rad* (*ayah* 13), and *Surah Bani Israil* (*ayah* 44 and 52), Ibn Abbas equates the words ‘*bi hamdihi*’ with ‘*bi Amrihi*’ so that ‘*Al Hamdu Lillah*’ is best rendered as ‘befitting is all command to Allah’. In the same way ‘*lillahil amaru jamilaa*’, (*Qur’an* 13:31) means that all command is with Allah.

If the meaning of *hamd* is restricted to praise it is difficult to explain how the thunder and the angels can praise Allah, as mentioned in the following *ayah* as it is generally rendered:

“And thunder hymns His praise, while angels stand in awe of Him.” (*Qur’an* 13:13).

The correct rendering could be:

“And thunder is duty bound to His command, while angels stand in awe of Him”. (*Qur’an* 13:13)

3. *Ayah* 1:6

The phrase ‘*ghairil maghdhube alaihim*’ is generally translated as “(O’Allah) do not lead (us astray) to the path of those who incurred thy wrath.” The clear meanings of *Ghairil maghdhube alaihim* is, Those who have not incurred His wrath. Supplication is made to Allah: “Guide us along the right path, the path of those who have been blessed and have not incurred Your wrath and who have not gone astray”.

Man is created as a free agent and has been endowed with the abilities to think and to act according to his will. Allah, having concern for the welfare of man, has shown the ‘Right Path’ through a succession of prophets. Through these prophets, Allah has also warned man against evil. It is man’s choice to accept the Divine Guidance or to reject it. When such is the case, it is naturally out of question to pray Allah not to lead the path of those who have astrayed. Guiding and leading astray are two contradictory things which cannot be attributed together to Allah.

The Qur'an says:

“And it is not Allah who would lead people astray after having guided them; He even makes clear to them what they should guard against....” (Qur'an 9:115)

It is unthinkable that Allah, who is so solicitous for the guidance of human beings and in his Benevolence sends His messengers to explain to men that they should guard against evil, could Himself lead men astray.

This misinterpretation is partly responsible for the great misconception regarding the Qur'an that it ascribes to Allah the attribute of leading people astray. Nothing could be further from the truth. “If leading astray were an attribute of God, as guiding certainly is, the name *Al-Mudzill* should have been included in the list of His names (attributes), as *Al-Hadi* is. But the Holy Qur'an, which repeatedly states that all of Allah's names are excellent, could not ascribe to Him what it has plainly ascribed to the Devil, viz. the leading astray of man. The sinners' own confession, repeatedly mentioned in Holy Qur'an, is that their great leaders misled them. Not once do they put forward the excuse that it was Allah who had misled them. Now if God had really led men astray, their best excuse on the Day of Judgment would have been that they did not deserve to be punished, because it was God Himself who led them astray. But not once is that excuse advanced in the Qur'an.....”¹

4. Ayaat 2:2

Usually, the meaning of '*la raiba fihi*' is taken as “there is no doubt in this Book (Qur'an).” In fact, the pronoun '*fihi*' does not refer to the Qur'an. '*Fihi*' points out and stresses the fact which is being mentioned. There was no question that there was raib (doubt) in the Qur'an. There were doubts in the minds of some individuals regarding whether or not it was actually a Book from Allah or a guidance from Allah. The fact that some people entertained such doubts, and still do, is stressed in the Qur'an:

“If you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to you, then [ask](#) those who have been reading the Book (for a long time) before you.” (Qur'an 10:94)

“And if you doubt any part of what We have bestowed from on high, step by step, upon Our servant (Muhammad), then produce a Surah of a similar merit...” (Qur'an 2:23)

To make the fact which is being mentioned acceptable, it is said: '*Laraiba fihi*' ie.

“There is no doubt in it that.” This method of expression is found in the

other *ayaat* of the Qur'an also:

"Verily the Hour of Judgment will come: there can be no doubt in it and verily Allah will raise up all who are in their graves" (Qur'an 22:7).

"The Hour (of judgment): there is no doubt thereof" (Qur'an 40:59).

"The revelation of the Book, there is no doubt about it, is from the Lord of all domains of existence" (Qur'an 32:2).

In the *ayah* in question 2:2, primarily, the address is to the Prophet, but the application is to the unbelievers. It is stressed in the first instance that the Qur'an is *Al-Kitab* (the Book from Allah).

The obvious meaning of this *ayah* is that this Book, the Qur'an, is from God.

Maulana Muhammad Ali rendered this *ayah* as under:

"There is no doubt that this Book is a guidance for the God-fearing or pious." (Qur'an 2:2)¹

It is very clear that 'fihi' does not refer to the Qur'an. Whether it stresses the fact that the Qur'an is *Al-Kitab* (the Book) or that it is a guidance for the 'mutaqeen' is to be determined. Its reference to being a guidance for the God-fearing appears to be more reasonable. The meaning of this *ayah* will, thus, be as follows:

"This (Qur'an) is *Al-Kitab* (the Book from Allah). There is no doubt (in the statement) that it is a guidance for the 'mutaqeen' (God conscious)".

It goes without saying that because it is the Book from Allah, the Qur'an is above doubt.

5. *Ayaat* 2:6 and 2:7

The Qur'an speaks of Allah setting seals on the hearts of the reprobate and hardened sinners who pay no heed to the call of the Qur'an.

"Those who disbelieve, it is being alike to them whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes". (Qur'an 2:6,7)

The seal spoken of here is in connection with those who have hardened their hearts so that they do not pay any heed to the teachings of the Prophet.

"They have hearts but do not try to understand with them, and they have eyes but do not try to see with them, and they have ears but do not try to

hear with them; they are as cattle.” (Qur’an 7:179)

According to the Qur’an, the cause of the seal is the sinners’ own act of intentionally defying and ignoring the truth:

“And there are those of them who listen to you, until when they go forth from you, they say to those who have been given the knowledge, ‘what was it that he said just now?’ These are they upon whose hearts Allah has set a seal and they (only) follow their low desires.” (Qur’an 47:16)

Allah sets seals upon the hearts of certain people as a result of their own actions.

6. *Ayaat* 2:40 and 2:47

“Oh Children of Israel! Call to mind the special favors which I bestowed upon you...”

In *ayah* 2:47 the following words are also added: “and that I preferred you to all others (over the world).”

There is no mention of any special favor which Allah bestowed upon the Children of Israel. The exegetes are not unanimous as to what the favor exactly was. Now a question arises as to what did this preference of Bani Israel (the Children of Israel) actually consisted of? Some exegetes are of the view that Bani Israel were chosen people. This notion is also based on the Old Testament, wherein it is mentioned:

“For they art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: The Lord, thy God hath chosen to be a special people to Himself, above all people that art upon the face of the earth.” (Deuteronomy 7:6)

It is also mentioned:

“You are My witnesses and My servants whom I have chosen.....” (Isaiah 43:10)

The persistent Jewish belief that they alone among all nations were God’s chosen people and that they alone have been graced with divine revelation is refuted by the Qur’an.

The fact that the Children of Israel were preferred over other people of the world is however mentioned in the Qur’an. The question still remains as to why they were preferred. Nobody can deny that their history is one which is abound with lawlessness and transgressions. One such transgression was regarding the Sabbath when Allah said to them.

“Become apes despied “. (Qur’an 2:64)

“Bani Israil went on rejecting the signs of Allah and killing his Prophets”. (Qur’an 2:61)

In fact the preference of Bani Israel consisted in their belief in 'tawhid'. "Their singular glory and peculiar excellence, as a race, lay in their special mission --- their tenacious, pure and absolute monotheism --- in fact the only living monotheism that the world knew before the advent of Islam".¹

This can truly be regarded as genuine reason for their preference over others.

7. *Ayaat* 2:58, 59 and 7:161,162

In the above *ayaat* Allah reminds the people of Israel about his injunction at the time of their entering the city, that they should enter the gates with humility - both physically and (demonstrating their humility) verbally (Qur'an 2:58). Allah also points out that the transgressors changed the word which was ordered. (Qur'an 2:59)

There are minor verbal differences in the *ayaat* of *Surah al-Araf*. In *Surah al-Baqarah*, the words 'enter the city' are used (*ayah* 58), whereas in *Surah al-Araf* the words 'dwell in the city' are used (*ayah* 161). Similarly, in *Surah al-Baqarah* the words 'they infringed' are used (*ayah*, 59), whereas in *Surah al-Araf* the words 'they transgressed' are used (*ayah* 162).

Similarly there are differences among the exegetes regarding the identification of the city mentioned in *ayaat* 2:58 and 7:161. Abdullah Yousuf Ali claims it was Shittim (Note 72), Abdul Majid Daryabadi claims it was either Shittim or Jericho (page 2, 17) and Palmer believes it was either Jerusalem or Jericho (page 6). However, all the commentators agree that the injunction was to repeat the word '*hittatun*' (to enter the gate prostrating and in a humble manner) and that the transgressors substituted another phrase. According to some the words were '*Habbah*' *fi sha-hirah*', which means to enter with an attitude of insolence and ridicule. The word '*hittah*' from *ayah* 2:58 can be rendered as 'remove Thou from us the burden of our sins'. The command 'say *hittatun*' in *ayah* 2:58 does not mean that Allah intended the people of Israel to actually proclaim the word '*hittatun*'. Pronouncing a word does not convey any sense. The eminent scholar "Muhammad Abduh is of the opinion that the saying referred to in *ayah* 58 is merely a metaphor for an attitude of mind demanded of them and that correspondingly, the 'substitution' signifies here a wilfull display of arrogance in disregard of Gods's command".¹

The change of word referred to in *ayaat* 2:59 and 7:162 indicates to the attitude of the people of Israel: when they were asked to enter the city with humility etc., they disregarded it by substituting excuses.

The two following *ayaat* of the Qur'an will be helpful in the clear

understanding of the *ayaat* in question:

“(Prophet Musa said) ‘Oh my people! Enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you and turn not back ignominiously, for then you will be overthrown to your own ruin’ “. (5:21)

“They answered, ‘Oh Musa! Behold, ferocious people dwell in that land, and we will surely not enter it unless they depart from there; Then, behold, we will enter it’ “. (Qur’an 5:22)

After hearing their apprehension Prophet Musa sent a delegation on a fact finding mission, which also gave a favorable report (Qur’an 5:23). In spite of this, the people of Israel not only refused to enter the city, but arrogantly told Prophet Musa.

“ ‘You and your Sustainer may go and fight, but we will remain here’ ” (Qur’an 5:24).

The words *Qaulan ghairul-lazi qeela lahum* in *ayaat* 2:59 and 7:162 indicate to the change of word. The people of Israel committed the offense of the change of word at the time of the first entrance into *Baital Maqdas*, during the life of Prophet Musa. The people of Israel were asked to wage war on the people of Jerusalem and to enter *Baital Maqdas*. They were also asked to enter with humility but they disobeyed both the injunctions. In the second instance, when they were asked to enter with humility, they disregarded the injunction and adopted the attitude of an unbelieving, victorious army. It may be noted that a similar injunction was given to Prophet Muhammad (S) at the time of entering *Baital Haram* (Qur’an 110:1-3). The Prophet and his companions submissively obeyed the Divine command.

8. *Ayaat* 2:63, 2:93, 4:154 and 7:171

When the Children of Israel migrated from Egypt, they went to the desert of Sinai. Prophet Musa called them to the foot of Mount Sinai to deliver the law to them and take a covenant from them. It is mentioned in the Bible:

“And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the Mount” (Exodus 19:17)

By misinterpreting this *ayah*, the Jewish scholars, with the intention of bringing in the supernatural element, fabricated the story of lifting Mount Sinai over their heads. A similar story of lifting a mountain is found in Hindu mythology, where Sri Krishna uproots the Goverdhan Mountain, lifting it on his fingers, and uses it as an umbrella against heavy rains for the inhabitants of Gokul for a period of seven days.

What is mentioned in the Qur’an is very simple and clear; “We raised the

mountain high above you” is a clear indication that the Children of Israel were at the foot of the Mountain. In the Bible there is a mention that:

“And Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount shook greatly.” (Exodus: Chapter 19, Verse 18).

The rendering of *ayah* 7:171 is as follows:

“When we shook the mount above them like a shade they feared it would fall on them, (We said) hold fast to what We have given and bear in mind all that is therein so that you might remain conscious of Allah.”

It cannot be construed, as some exegetes have suggested that Allah forced the people of Israel who were reluctant and took the covenant from them while the Mount Sinai hung over their heads. It would only amount to Allah taking the covenant under a threat that Mount Sinai would fall over them if they refused. There is not the slightest suggestion in the above *ayah* that the Mount Sinai was actually hanging over them. The fact is that the Children of Israel were at the foot of the mountain while Prophet Musa went up to receive the commandments. “The mountain ----- must indeed have appeared an awe-inspiring sight above to the camp at its foot.”¹ The Children of Israel must have felt as if the mountain was about to fall on them.

The phrase ‘*rafa’na fauqam at tur’*’ does not indicate that the mount was physically raised from its place. It only means that the Children of Israel were at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain with its towering height was rising by their side.

9. *Ayaat* 2:106 and 16:101

“Whatever passages We do abrogate or consign to oblivion, We replace (them) with a better or similar one.” (Qur’an 2:106)

“And now that We replace one passage with another - Allah knows best what He reveals ----- they say you are a forger.” (Qur’an 16:101)

Doctrine of abrogation.

Taking a restricted meaning of ‘*ayaat*’ as the *ayaat* of the Qur’an and misinterpreting the above two *ayaat* in the (Qur’an 2:106 and 16:101), some classical commentators came to the conclusion that certain *ayaat* of the Qur’an have been abrogated before the revelation of the Qur’an was completed. Here, ‘*ayaat*’ refers to those injunctions in the earlier books, which were replaced by injunctions in the Qur’an.

The theory of abrogation is that Allah cancelled and removed

certain *ayaat* of the Qur'an and replaced them with similar or better ones. This interpretation appears to be erroneous for it presupposes that certain injunctions of the Qur'an have been abrogated.

At the root of the 'doctrine of abrogation' was also the inability of some of the early exegetes to reconcile one Qur'anic passage with another. They found it easy to overcome the difficulty by declaring that one of the *ayaat* in question had been abrogated by another. This was, however, an arbitrary observation.

It explains why there was no consensus or unanimity among the classical commentators as to which and how many of the *ayaat* in the Qur'an were abrogated. They all, however, agree that certain *ayaat* of the Qur'an have been abrogated. When such is the case, doubts regarding the *ayaat* in the Qur'an are generated in the minds of the believers.

For the correct understanding of this *ayah* it is necessary to know the occasion of revelation, in its wider aspect. The *ayah* 2:106 is a Medinan revelation. When the Qur'an confirmed the teachings of the earlier books which were revealed by Allah and declared that its *ayaat* are similar '*mutashabih*' to the *ayaat* of the earlier books and that the *ayaat* of the earlier books are '*ma tashabih minhu*' (3:7), the Jews in Madinah entertained doubts in their own minds and also created doubts in the minds of the Muslims: When the earlier books were revealed by Allah and the Qur'an was also revealed by Allah, then why the Qur'an has given different injunctions in place of certain injunctions of the earlier books. Similar doubts were raised by the Christians. Both the Jews and the Christians argued as to why they should not follow '*ma tashabih minhu*' ie. their own Books. In response to these doubts, the above *ayah* as well as *ayah* 3:7 were revealed.

The Jews (Israelites) were observing certain self-imposed restrictions: They regarded eating flesh of camel and hunting on *Sabbath* as forbidden. Similarly on the authority of *Talmud* (and not of *Taurat*) they regarded usury as lawful.

The use of the word '*aunansaha*' is clearly indicative that when due to human interference, and corruption the injunctions of the earlier books were forgotten or neglected by the followers, Allah replaced them by better or similar *ayaat* (to the original) in the form of Qur'anic *ayaat* (messages).

The subtle point contained in this clear interpretation could not however draw the attention of our scholars and exegetes, which resulted in a lengthy, endless and unnecessary discussion. The outcome was that a large number of Qur'anic *ayaat* were declared as obliterating, '*nasikh*' and obliterated, '*mansukh*'.

If we study the gradual development of these discussions, it will be

found that earlier exegetes were of the opinion that not less than 500 *ayaat* of the Qur'an are obliterating and obliterated. Except for a few Qur'anic *Surahs*, such *ayaat* are to be found in almost all the *Surahs* of the Qur'an. Later, when the issue was further critically examined, the number of supposed abrogated *ayaat* gradually decreased.

The great Qur'anic scholar, Jalaluddin Suyuti in his eminent book *Al-Itqan fi Uloomil Qur'an* came to the conclusion that the number of obliterated *ayaat* is not more than 19. Suyuti was of the view that there is basically no obliteration in the Qur'an. If in respect of any particular *ayah* obliteration is proved by convincing reason, then alone obliteration will be accepted as an exception.¹

According to Dr. Subhi Saleh of Beirut, the number of obliterated *ayaat* is no more than ten. Shah Waliullah Dehlavi has critically studied the 19 *ayaat* pointed out as obliterated by Suyuti. He has made an indepth study, and on the authority of exegetes who agreed that any of these 19 *ayaat* are not obliterated, came to the conclusion that only five *ayaat* of the Qur'an can be considered as obliterated.²

Thus the supposed obliterating and obliterated *ayaat* decreased from 500 to 5, yet the scholars agreed in principle that certain *ayaat* of the Qur'an were abrogated. They all looked at the problem from almost the same angle. None of these scholars realized that the abrogation, or '*naskh*', mentioned in the *ayaat* 2:106 and 16:101 refer to abrogation of the messages (*ayaat*) of the earlier Books which was in fact due to neglect of the Books by the followers themselves.³

The exegetes who support the doctrine of abrogation did not shy away from implying that Allah contradicted Himself.

Among the earlier commentators, Abu Muslim Isphahani, (d. 332/H) was the first one to oppose the doctrine of abrogation. According to him, "Abrogated *ayaat* are those Divine orders which were found in earlier Books (*Taurat* and *Injeel*) concerning *Sabbath*, facing towards east or west during prayers, etc. Allah has abrogated these earlier *ayaat* and they do not find place in the Qur'an. Jews and Christians used to tell their own people that they should accept a person who follows their religion. By the *ayah* in question, Allah has regarded this attitude as incorrect." He based his rejection (of the doctrine of abrogation) mostly on the following *ayah*:

"And convey (to the world) whatever has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord: There is nothing that could alter His words; and you cannot find as a refuge other than Him." (Qur'an 18:27)

According to *Tafseer-al-Kabeer* abrogation of *ayaat* of the Qur'an is not proved from the *ayaat* (2:106, 16:101) in question. It only described the Divine

principle that if any *ayah* (of the Qur'an) will be obliterated, Allah will substitute it with a better or similar *ayah* or injunction.

Many commentators of the later period similarly do not subscribe to the doctrine of abrogation. Mufti Muhammad Abduh of Egypt was of the opinion that not a single *ayah* of the Qur'an can be considered abrogated. The eminent Indian exegete Maulana Abdul Qadeer Siddiqui (1871-1962) was one of the many scholars who strongly negated the doctrine of abrogation. In his Urdu booklet, he has strongly and successfully argued that not a single *ayah* of Qur'an was abrogated.

Non-Muslim oriental scholars have taken advantage of the general belief of abrogation, which gives support to their contention that Prophet was the author of the Qur'an. Henry Preserved Smith for example says "it could not be expected that a collection of occasional leaflets published at intervals during more than 20 years, should be free from inconsistencies or even contradictions. Such inconsistencies were admitted by Muhammad himself. Some of them he removed by erasure. In some cases he laid the blame on his memory and once he confessed that *Satan* had misled him. Finally, he declared that God abrogated some regulations by later enactments."

John Burton's 'The Collection of the Qur'an' takes the doctrine of '*naskh*' much too far in speculating that the entire text of the Qur'an was edited, checked and promulgated by the Prophet himself.

There was no unanimity among the supporters of the doctrine as to whether the alleged abrogation implied a total elimination of the *ayaat* in question from the text of the Qur'an or only cancellation of the ordinance contained therein.

The above two *ayaat* 2:106 and 16:101 are supposed to lend support to the theory of abrogation. In fact, they really refer not to the abrogation of the passages of the Qur'an but to the previous revelations whose place the Qur'an has taken. The principle laid down in above passages relating to the supersession of the Biblical dispensation by that of the Qur'an has been misinterpreted by many Qur'anic exegetes.

As for the former *ayah*, a reference to the context will show that the addressees in fact are the followers of earlier religions. It is obvious that the words 'or causes to be forgotten' cannot refer to the Qur'an at all. It is out of question to suppose that Allah should first make the Prophet forget an *ayah* and then reveal a new one in its place. If the Prophet had really forgotten an *ayah*, he could have just as easily been reminded of it. In fact, the Prophet never forgot an *ayah*. The Qur'an testifies to it:

“We shall make you recite so you shall not forget.” (Qur’an 87:6)

Similarly in *ayah* 16:101 ‘replacing’ one message by another implies “by substituting the message of the Qur’an for the earlier dispensations ---- and not, as some Muslim scholars maintain, ‘abrogating’ one Qur’anic *ayah* and replacing it by another”.¹

It remained the general conviction of Muslim scholars throughout the centuries that the divinely revealed *Shari’as* had abrogated one another as they appeared successively in history. One *Shari’a* was thought to have totally superseded the previous one until the coming of the final *Shari’a* of Islam.

It is a fact that the message of the Prophet Muhammad (S) superseded the earlier revelations. It is also a fact that parts of the older revelations had been lost and forgotten.

In view of the following reasons, it is obvious that the reference in *ayah* 16:101 is to the abrogation of the previous revelations and not of the Qur’anic *ayaat*:

(1) *Surah al-Nahl* (16) is a Makkan revelation whereas *ayaat* containing the detailed law (*shariat*) were all of the Medinan period.

(2) The enemies of Islam called the entire Qur’an a forgery because the Prophet of Islam claimed that the Qur’an, a Divine revelation, had taken the place of earlier revelations. The *ayah* in question speaks of one message taking the place of another. The word ‘*ayah*’ in the *ayah* in question refers to messages and not individual *ayaat* of the Qur’an. As such the theory of abrogation cannot by any stretch of imagination be based on this *ayah*.

The doctrine of abrogation deserves to be rejected as it is not supported by the Qur’an. If the term ‘*ayah*’ in the above *ayah* is understood correctly, as message, and if this *ayah* is read in conjunction with the preceding one, it becomes very clear that abrogation relates to the earlier Divine message and not to any part of the Qur’an. “Apart from the fancifulness of this assertion which calls to mind the image of a human author correcting, on second thought the proofs of his manuscript, deleting one passage and replacing it with another there does not exist a single reliable tradition to the effect that the Prophet ever declared a verse of the Qur’an to have been ‘abrogated’”.¹

It is in this connection that it becomes necessary for a student of the Qur’an to know the process of corruption in the texts of the holy Scriptures.

At a time when most of the Jewish people were ignorant of the scriptures, their religious leaders and Rabbis exploited them. They fabricated a religion of their fancy, to suit their own interest. They interpolated legendary tales and superstitious ideas and made bold claims that these

interpolations were also Divine. They also offered explanatory comments on the scriptures.

Mishnah is an epitome of the civil and religious laws of the Jews as it was interpreted, formulated and developed in Palestine up to the beginning of the 3rd century. After its compilation, *Mishnah* became established as a book of authority in Palestine and Babylonia. *Mishnah* is a work wherein is deposited the bulk of the literary labors of numerous Jewish scholars over a period of 700 years.

Talmud is a commentary on *Mishnah* (of R. Judah the Patriarch) composed about 220 C.E. There are two genres of *Talmud*, namely *Halaka* and *Haggada*. *Halaka* embraces two areas of prescribed conduct; one relating to the rules of ritual and religion, the other pertaining to the rights and obligations of Jews in civil society. *Haggada*, which comprises one-third of the *Talmud*, contains whatever is excluded from *Halaka*.

Talmud ranks next to the sacred scriptures in significance as a source of religious insight and practice. Talmudic literature is vast in extent. The fact, however, remains that the *Talmud* is a human effort. Throughout the ages, religious scholars in the course of translation or otherwise, ventured to corrupt or change the text of the scriptures according to their own interpretation and understanding. Due to such interpolations and corruption of the Divine messages and due to the fact the original messages were almost forgotten, Allah replaced such messages by the Qur'an. The theory that some *ayaat* of the Qur'an itself had been abrogated by other *ayaat* is therefore, false.

10. *Ayaat* 2:136, 2:285, 3:84 and 4:152

Ayah 2:136 is generally rendered as follows:

"Say: 'We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and to Ibrahim and Ismail, Is-haaq, Yaquub and his progeny and the (revelation) given to Musa and I'sa that which was given to all Prophets from their Lord; we do not differentiate or make any distinction between any of them, and we bow to Allah.'" (Qur'an 2:136)

The rendering, 'We do not differentiate' does not fully convey the exact meaning. The underlying idea is: "We regard all of them as true messengers of Allah." In other words it means that we do not reject any one of them, nor do we delete any of them from the position of Messenger of Allah. Not making distinction, in fact, means believing some messengers as true and rejecting others. The rendering, "We do not make distinction between any of them" does not fully convey the meaning as making distinction may apply to a situation where a particular person is accepted as a prophet yet he is considered inferior or superior as compared to other prophets. "We do not

make distinction" requires a qualifying clause: "so far as the fact of their messengership is concerned." The rendering we do not discount anyone of them among the messengers will be more appropriate.

In the Qur'an it is clearly indicated that Allah has not made the status of all the messengers equal. Some of the messengers of Allah are regarded higher than others:

"Some of these apostles have We endowed more highly than others: among them were such as were spoken to by Allah (Himself) and some He has raised yet higher..." (Qur'an 2:253)

If *ayaat* 2:136, 2:285 and 3:284 are interpreted to mean that one should not differentiate between the prophets, it would go against the very purport of *ayah* 2:253.

'*Nufarriqu*' is derived from the root '*faraqa*', which means to split, divide and by implication, it means to delete, to part with or to reject. The derivative '*tafriq*', meaning division or deletion is also from the same root.

The expression '*la nufarriqu*' connotes separateness. Here it is in respect of qualities and functions and not degrees.

'*Bayna Ahadin*' is indicative: "We will not make any distinction amongst anyone of them" makes it clear that distinction only means deletion or rejection. This is made very clear when the unbelievers are defined in the Qur'an:

"Those who deny Allah and His apostles and wish to separate Allah from His apostles, saying: 'We believe in some but disbelieve in others and wish to pursue a path in between.'" (Qur'an 4:150)

In the above *ayaat* (2:136, 2:285 and 4:152) accepting some messengers and rejecting others as the messengers of Allah is deprecated. Moreover, in these *ayaat*, the fundamental unity of all the messages brought by the messengers of Allah is emphasized.

11. *Ayah* 3:7

"He it is who has sent down

To thee the Book:

In it are *ayaat*

Basic and fundamental

(of established meaning)

They are the foundation

Of the book; others

Are allegorical But those

In whose hearts is perversity follow

The part thereof that is allegorical

Seeking discord, and searching

For its hidden meanings,

But no one knows

Its hidden meaning except God.

And those who are firmly grounded

In knowledge say: 'We believe

in the Book; the whole of it

Is from our Lord'; and none

will grasp the Message

Except the men of understanding". (Rendering by Abdullah Yusuf Ali)

According to the traditional interpretation of this *ayah*, some '*ayaat*' of the Qur'an are '*muhkamaat*' (clear, basic), which are the foundation of the Book, and others are '*mutashabihaat*' (figurative, allegorical). Men with perversity follow the allegorical '*ayaat*', seeking discord and futile interpretation. No one except God knows the interpretation. Those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say "'We believe in the Book. The whole of it is from our Lord'". None will grasp the message except men of understanding.

The correct meaning of some of the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are not fully understood, causing some basic misunderstandings. In my humble opinion this is one of those *ayaat*.

From this *ayah* it is generally construed that the Qur'an consists of two sets of '*ayaat*', i.e., '*muhkamaat*' (containing clear instructions wherein there is

no possibility of any doubt), and '*mutashabihaat*' (the dubious *ayaat*, couched in allegorical, metaphorical and figurative language and according to some, ambiguous).

The exegetes and translators of the Qur'an have given the impression that some of the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are '*muhkamaat*' and others are '*mutashabihaat*', that broadly speaking the Qur'an is divided into two portions, not given separately, but intermingled and that both the qualities are almost contradictory to each other. Since some of the *ayaat* are '*muhkamaat*' which are straight forward and the meaning of which are very clear, '*mutashabihaat*' are the *ayaat* in which the apparent meaning are not that clear. The real meanings of these *ayaat* are not understood by anyone except Allah and those of sound knowledge.

In the above *ayah* there is no indication that the Qur'an consists of two sets of *ayaat*. In fact it is stated that the *ayaat* of the Qur'an (in the first instance) are '*muhkam*' and secondly, they are '*mutashabih*'. The word '*ukhru*' used in the *ayah* clearly indicates that what follows is yet another attribute of the Qur'an. It is very clear that the *muhkamaat* and *mutashabihaat* are the two attributes of the Qur'an.

The word '*ukhra*' has been used in the following *ayah*:

"Musa, Now draw your hand close to your armpit; it shall come forth white (and shining) without any blemish (or stain). (This is) yet another (*ukhra*) sign (to assure you in advance)" (Qur'an 20:22)

The word '*ukhra*' has uniformly been translated as 'another' or 'one more'.

In *ayah* 3:7 a pair of two distinct attributes of the Qur'anic *ayaat* are mentioned. One attribute is mentioned that the *ayaat* are firm precise or basic (*muhkam*) and the other (*ukharu*) attribute is mentioned that the *ayaat* are similar to or facsimile of (the earlier scriptures). Reference is to the two attributes and the word *ukharu* (yet another) points to another attribute and not to another set of *ayaat* as generally understood.

As far as the meaning of '*muhkamaat*' is concerned, there is neither any difficulty nor difference of opinion. '*Muhkamaat*' are the bases of the Book. *Umm* is also the head of something. As regards '*mutashabihaat*' however, a lot of confusion has arisen. Different meanings have been offered by exegetes. Some have interpreted the word as meaning allegorical, metaphorical and figurative. Others have interpreted that some of the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are similar to other *ayaat* of the Qur'an.

The word '*ayaat*' occurring in this *ayah* means 'messages'. '*Ayaat*' in its restricted meaning is used to denote an *ayah* of the Qur'an, because every one

of these *ayaat* contain a 'divine message'. Taking this restricted meaning of the term '*ayaat*', the exegetes came to the conclusion that certain *ayaat* of the Qur'an are similar to the other *ayaat* of the Qur'an, or that some *ayaat* of the Qur'an are of doubtful meaning because of their allegorical import and hence liable to more than one meaning, etc.

It is a fact that the Qur'an has frequently resorted to figurative language and allegorical, and metaphorical expressions to convey ideas and themes which are beyond the reach of human understanding; but it is perhaps not correct to designate such *ayaat* as '*ayaat mutashabihaat*'. The simple meaning of the word '*mutashabihaat*' is unfortunately lost in oblivion by the introduction of undeniable details of figurative speech in the Qur'an which have no etymological or any other connection with '*mutashabihaat*'. A little reflection will show that the '*mutashabihaat*' have nothing to do with the figures of speech and that the figures of speech in the Qur'an cannot be termed as '*mutashabihaat*'.

The word '*mutashabihaat*' etymologically, means comparable and consistent with the other, having likeness or resemblance to the other. It is used for similarity between two separate categories. It is interesting to note that wherever the word '*mutashabih*' (or any of the derivatives of the root *shabbah*) are used, it is invariably and uniformly used to mean similar, alike, or having resemblance (for example *ayaat* 2:25, 6:99, 6:141 etc.). The derived meaning of the root Sh-b-h is to be doubtful or dubious; because an exact copy will create a doubt whether it is the original or a copy.

By any stretch of imagination it cannot be accepted that parts of the Qur'an which was revealed to instruct the people to show them the desirable way of conduct contains ambiguous *ayaat* that too not clearly identified. In fact the Qur'an is in most comprehensible language and it is understood by its audience. How then can it be accepted that Allah has given the book to the people but has prevented them from reaching an understanding of part of it?

Nowhere in the Qur'an the word *mutashabih* is used to mean ambiguous or figurative. Yet most of the English translators have rendered the word *mutashabihaat* occurring in *ayah* 3:7 as 'allegorical' (Ahmed Ali, Dr. Aneesuddin, Muhammad Asad, T.B. Irving, Dr. Rashad Khalifa, Zafrulla Khan, Marmaduke Pickthall, M.H. Shakir, Mahmud Zayid) 'ambiguous' (Arberry, Imadul Mulk, N.J. Dawood, Abul A'ala Maududi, Palmer, M. A.K. Pathan). 'figurative' (Mirza Abul Fazl, Maulana Azad, Dr. Latif) not entirely clear (Abdullah Yusuf Ali) and con-similar (open to various interpretations) (Abdul Majid Daryabadi). Only in one translation we find *mutashabihaat* rendered as facsimiles (of former scriptures) (Dr. Hashim Amir Ali).

The eminent English exegete, Muhammad Asad for example, says, "*Ayaat mutashabihaat* may be defined as those passages of the Qur'an which

are expressed in figurative manner, with a meaning that is metaphorically implied but not directly, in so many words, stated".¹

It is an undeniable fact that the Qur'an has used figurative and allegorical language as part of its technique. But there is no justification to surmise that the figurative and allegorical elements are termed as '*mutashabihaat*'. In fact, extensive use of figurative language (similies and metaphors) is to bring home to the addressee abstract speculation about metaphysical matters in more tangible form. The more an author bestows his attention on the choice of figures of speech, the more vivid and effective does his expression become. In fact, figure of speech play a great part in making the expression more clear. There is no etymological justification to say that *themutashabihaat* refers to *amsaal* and similitudes.

Similarly, '*mutashabihaat*' cannot be qualified as "the Key Phrase of all its (the Qur'an's) Key Phrases" as observed by Muhammad Asad.¹

The definition of *mutashabihaat* as similar *ayaat* leads us to a wider perception. Since *mutashabih* cannot be used for similarity of some *ayaat* of the Qur'an with other *ayaat* of the Qur'an itself, similarity of the Qur'anic messages is only to those of the earlier scriptures in their pristine purity. This claim is often repeated in the Qur'an. Here in (Qur'an 3:7) it is mentioned as one of the two attributes of the Qur'an.

In this *ayah* two different and distinct qualities of the Qur'an are mentioned i.e., all the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are '*muhkam*' and that all the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are '*mutashabih*'. There is not the slightest suggestion in the *ayah* that '*mutashabih*' is opposed or contrasted to '*muhkam*'.

There is no indication in the *ayah* that the two tributes are opposite to each other. In fact both attributes are complementary. The entire Qur'an is *muhkam* and the entire Qur'an is *mutashabih*.

It is mentioned that the Qur'an is a book whose *ayaat* are clear and decisive i.e. '*muhkam*':

"This is a book whose *ayaat* are fundamental and clear" (Qur'an 11:1).

The entire Qur'an is '*muhkam*' if taken as a whole. Similarly, the Qur'an has claimed that all the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are '*mutashabih*':

"Allah has revealed (the Qur'an as) the best discourse, (in the form of a Book) having resemblance (with the earlier messages) and repeating (each statement of the truth in manifold forms)" (Qur'an 39:23).

According to (Qur'an 11:1) all the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are characterized as *mukkam*, while *ayah* 39:23 states that the Qur'anic *ayaat* bear the features

of *mutashabih*.

Thus it is clear that the terms '*muhkam*' and '*mutashabih*' have been used to apply to the Qur'an as a whole. According to the arguments of Fakhruddin ar Razi *muhkamaat* and *mutashabihaat* are not two groups of *ayaat* where one is opposed to the other or one is superior to the other. Abdullah Yusuf Ali accepts this position that, the whole of the Qur'an has both '*muhkam*' and '*mutashabih*' meanings, and that the division is not between the *ayaat*.¹ When such is the case, it is out of question to presume that some of the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are '*muhkam*' and the rest '*mutashabih*'.

Moreover, the words '*ma tashabih minhu*' used in the *ayah* are very crucial. It is mentioned in the above *ayah* that those who have leanings and are inclined to cause mischief and crave for discord are always after '*matashabeh minhu*'. If '*mutashabih*' is interpreted as figurative the question remains as to how '*ma tashabih minhu*' would be interpreted.

In fact, '*mutashabihaat*' are those *ayaat* of the Qur'an which are similar to the *ayaat* of earlier scriptures. Thus, the *ayaat* of the previous scriptures are obviously '*ma tashabih minhu*'.

Those in whose heart is leanings refers to those who follow *ma tashabih minhu* (i.e., the earlier scriptures) to create dissent.

The claim that the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are similar to the *ayaat* of earlier scriptures is strictly in conformity with the statement of the Qur'an that it is not the first Book from Allah.

"He has sent down to thee the Book containing the truth and fulfilling that which precedes it, and He has sent down the *Torah* and the Gospel before this, as a guidance to the people and He has (now) sent down the *Furqan*" (Qur'an 3:3-4).

"Nothing is said to you which has not been said to other messengers before you" (Qur'an 41:43).

The very same idea is conveyed and reiterated in this *ayah* that the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are '*mutashabih*' i.e. similar to the *ayaat* of the earlier scriptures. '*Mutashabih*' means having resemblance. Allah's books were revealed at different times. And yet all of them are similar to each other.

When the *ayah* 41:43 was revealed, the Jews and the Christians of Medina, (who were the people of the Book), were double-minded. When the Qur'an claimed that its *ayaat* were similar to the *ayaat* of earlier scriptures, they argued: "If it is so, why can't we follow our own books?". To this, the Qur'an replied in this *ayah*: "Only those who have a particular inclination or leaning follow '*ma tashabih minhu*' i.e., the earlier scriptures. Those who are of

sound knowledge simply say, 'We believe therein, the whole is from our Lord'".

The early converts from the people of the Book were warned against assuming the attitude and orientation to follow the earlier books. There is not the slightest indication in the *ayah* 3:7 that the *mutashabihaat* of the Qur'an are not to be followed. The deprecatory phrase *alladhina fiqulubihim 'zayg'* refers to those who follow the *ma tashabih minhu* and not to *mutashabihaat*. This fact is overlooked by almost every interpreter.

The Qur'an observes:

"Never will the Jews be pleased with you. (O prophet nor the Christians until you follow their way". (Qur'an 2:120).

It is to be noted that by the time the Qur'an was revealed, the earlier Books had been corrupted. The Qur'an while accepting in principle that the earlier Books were revealed by Allah, confirmed some of the statements of the earlier Books, which were found to be correct and also appropriate. Regarding the other statements, the Qur'an either kept silent, or specifically contradicted them.

Some medieval commentators have considered *muhkamaat* as abrogating and *mutashabihaat* as abrogated *ayaat*. As discussed separately, there are no abrogating or abrogated *ayaat* in the Qur'an. Hence these explanations cannot be accepted.

If the general belief, is accepted that some of the *ayaat* of the Qur'an are *Muhkam* and rest are *Mustahabih*, there is no indication anywhere in the entire exegetic literature as to which of the *ayaat* are *muhkam* and which are *mutashabih*. The general feeling created by the exegetes that it is undesirable to go after the *mutashabihaat* will only end in confusion. Any *ayah* of the Qur'an in that case, can be considered as *mutashabih* and thus it would not be proper to interpret it. According to the above *ayah* however, it is not the pursuit of *mutashabih* which is undesirable, but it is the pursuit of *ma tashabih minhu* which is undesirable and which is reprobated.

12. *Ayah* 3:26

"Say: 'Oh Allah Lord of all domains, You give dominion to whom You will and take away authority from whom You will, and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Your Hand is all-good. Surely You are All-Powerful'." (Qur'an 3:26).

Generally this *ayah* is interpreted to convey the idea that Allah uses absolute discretion and gives sovereignty to whomsoever He pleases.

To say that all is according to the will of Allah, does not mean that Allah

without any reason, will honor or disgrace a person or a group. It is not befitting the 'Divine Law' and His justice that a person or a nation will be treated in a particular way overlooking the nature of the deeds. It is the basic principle with Allah that good deeds will be duly rewarded and evil actions will be duly punished.

Allah says:

"Allah would never change favours and blessings that He has conferred upon a people until they change their innerselves" (Qur'an 8:53),

And also:

"Surely Allah changes not the (external) condition of a people (favours He has conferred upon them or the adversity with which they are afflicted) until they change that which is within their hearts" (Qur'an 13:11).

In the *ayah* in question, the will of Allah is expressed in a general way. In the above quoted *ayaat* of *Surah Anfaal* (8) and *Surah Raad* (13) it is shown how the will of Allah actually functions.

No doubt it is the will of Allah or His intention (desire) that ultimately prevails, yet He has of His own will, given freedom of faith and action to man. In other words, man is a creature with will. It is his choice to either commit himself to the will of Allah and model his life after the Divine pattern, or to follow his own desires, against the will of Allah. In the former case, he will be richly recompensed and in the latter case he will be retributed with disaster and grief.

It is man's good fortune that he is required to submit to the will of the Creator, who is just and merciful, and does not want to harm any of His creatures.

The Qur'an says:

"Whatever good happens to you is from Allah; and whatever evil befalls you is from yourselves" (Qur'an 4:79).

The Qur'an shows in detail for the guidance of man, how the will of Allah operates, both in governing the universe and the life of man on earth, and how He fulfills His ways (*Sunnat Allah*). The Qur'an demands man to submit or commit to the will of Allah.

13. *Ayah* 4:1

From the words '*wa khalaqa minha zoujaha*' in the above *ayah*, some exegetes have opined that Eve was created from the rib of Adam. They

substantiate this view on the strength of two traditions from Bukhari. In both traditions, however, there is no mention at all of the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam.

In the biblical story of Adam and Eve which is quite unfair to womankind, "it is said that God first created Adam, and then, out of his rib, He created Eve. The rib is crooked and so devout men were quite prepared to admit the same crookedness in the nature of woman. The sequel of the story shows that woman is not only crooked but also weak. She quickly succumbed to the seductions of *Satan* and tempted Adam into sin. The story of Adam and Eve, in which Eve plays the role of the temptress, is widely believed in throughout the Christian world. The attitude of the Christians toward women is, therefore, tinged with fear and hostility...The Qur'an completely changed man's attitude toward woman."¹

Thus the idea that Eve was created from the rib of Adam is originally borrowed from the Bible:

"And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;..."

"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man." (Genesis, 2:21-22).

But the translation 'rib' is incorrect, and the word so translated has the real meaning, in both Arabic and Hebrew, of 'nature, disposition or constitution'. Eve, that is woman was created, out of the same nature or disposition as man. Since the word has been mistranslated as 'rib', the legend arose that woman was created from the left rib of Adam, and therefore, all men are lacking one rib.

The Qur'an nowhere says that man was created first, then woman was created. The Qur'an says that for everyone, life originated from a monocyte:

"O men; fear your Lord who created you from a single cell (*nafs*) and from it created its mate, and from the two of them dispersed men and women (male and female) in multitudes." (Qur'an 4:1)

With minor difference of words the same idea is conveyed in *ayah* 7:189 also. In the above *ayaat*, it is said that Allah created the mate (spouse and not wife) from one *nafs* i.e. single cell. In both *ayaat*, the literal rendering of '*minha*' as 'out of it' alludes to '*nafsin wahida*' as the single source of the creation of both man and woman.

Similarly, the Qur'an says:

"And Allah has provided for you one of your own kind and has given you through your mates children and children's children." (Qur'an 16:72)

The term '*zawj*' denotes not only a pair or a couple, but also one of a pair or mate of the opposite sex.

Again, the Qur'an says:

"And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own kind (from among yourselves)." (Qur'an 30:21)

Thus it is very clear from the Qur'an that woman was not created from any part of man's body but that both were created from one living entity.

The Qur'an nowhere says that woman was responsible for man's first act of disobedience.

Says the Qur'an:

"But *Shaitan* tempted them (Adam and his wife) and had them banished from the (happy) state they were in....." (Qur'an 2:36).

It is very clear from the *ayah* in question that Allah created man and woman from the same substance and material, at the same time. They share the same lineage, and are brothers and sisters to each other, descended from the same father and mother.

14. Ayaat 8: 67 and 68

These *ayaat* have been generally rendered as follows:

"It is not benefitting for a Prophet to keep captives until he has thoroughly subdued the land. You look for the temporal good of this world, but God desires (for you the good of) the life to come, and God is Almighty, Wise". (Qur'an 8:67)

"Had it not been for the decree from God that had already gone forth, there would indeed have befallen on you a tremendous chastisement on account of all (the captives/ransom) that you took." (Qur'an 8:68)

All the exegetes are almost unanimous that in the above *ayaat*, the Prophet is the addressee.

According to some commentators, there are five instances in the Qur'an where Allah has disapproved one or the other action of the Prophet, and has used strong words. This *ayah*, according to them, is one of them. The other four are as follows:

1. "And it is not proper for you (O Prophet!) to decide whether He shall accept their repentance or chastise them. For behold! they are but

wrongdoers.." (Qur'an 3:128)

2. "It is not proper for the Prophet and for those who have attained to faith, to pray that they who ascribed divinity to aught besides Allah, be forgiven (by Him); even though they happened to be (their) near kin; after it has been made clear to them that those (dead sinners) are destined for the blazing fire." (Qur'an 9:113)
3. "O Prophet! Why dost thou, out of a desire to please (one or another of) thy wives, impose (on thyself) a prohibition of something that God has made lawful unto you?" (Qur'an 66:01)
4. "He frowned and turned away, because the blind man approached him! Yet, for all thou didst know (O Mohammed) he might have perhaps grown into purity, or have been reminded (of the truth) and helped by this reminder." (Qur'an 80:1-4)

There is no unanimity among the exegetes regarding the occasion of revelation of these *ayaat* (8:67-68) to specifically determine the reason for Allah's wrath. Based on various traditions, different opinions are offered. The following, among others, are found in the exegete literature.

- i. Allah's wrath was for not killing the prisoners of war. On return to Medina following the victory in Badr, the Prophet consulted his senior companions on how to deal with the prisoners of war. Different opinions were offered. Some suggested killing all of them, as per tradition, as well as by the then-existing injunction contained in the Bible. Others suggested to set them free, after collecting ransom. The Prophet decided to act on the latter advice.
- ii. Allah's wrath was for collecting the ransom itself from the prisoners of war. Allah's order that the collection of ransom was permissible had not yet come. Thus the Prophet's action was condemned as a hasty one.
- iii. Allah's wrath was for going after the spoils of war.

Apart from the fact that the traditions regarding the 'occasion of revelation' of these *ayaat* are contradictory to each other, they are not very reliable. The very mode of address obviously shows that the addressee in the above *ayaat* cannot be the Prophet or his followers. The fact that the addressee throughout this *surah* is the Prophet, lead the exegetes to presume that the addressee in these *ayaat* is also the Prophet. They have not taken into account the unique characteristic that the Qur'an possesses, in which it will change addressees during its course. This typical style of the Qur'an is termed as '*tasreef*'. These two *ayaat* are an apt example of '*tasreef*'.

"The addressees of these two *ayaat* are, in fact, the non-believers,

especially the Jews. They demanded miracles from the Prophet and questioned how come a person who claims to be a harbinger of mercy for mankind is causing bloodshed. The above *ayaat* were revealed in response to these doubts and allegations".¹

In response to the many allegations by the doubtful Jews, the Qur'an addresses them and says: "let alone the bloodshed, it is not befitting the Prophet to keep captives even when he has thoroughly subdued the land. You look for the temporal goods of this world, but Allah intends the life to come."

Similarly, in the next *ayah* 8:68 the Jews are told that, had it not been for the Divine Law (*Kitab*), there would have indeed befallen a tremendous chastisement on account of (the way of life) that they had adopted.

To presume that the Prophet has been addressed in these *ayaat* amounts to the belief that the Prophet and his followers were after the fleeting gains or vanities of this life. Such a presumption is baseless. On the other hand, the Qur'an says about the Jews:

"And thou wilt most certainly find that they cling to life more eagerly than any other people." (Qur'an 2:96)

It may be seen that in the above four passages, i.e. *ayaat* 3:128, 9:113, 66:1 and 80:1-4, the form of disapproval, if it is to be considered so, is quite different from that in the *ayah* in question. In the above four *ayaat*, Allah has, so to speak, guided and groomed the Prophet and pointed out to him certain guidelines to be followed in his prophetic mission. It cannot be said about these four *ayaat* that there is an admonishment or rebuke contained within them.

The attitude in the *ayaat* in question (8:67-68), however is quite different. In these *ayaat*, Allah has disparaged the addressee. To construe that the addressee is the Prophet amounts to derogation of his high status (*Maqam al-Mahmood*) assigned to him by Allah. By no stretch of imagination, therefore, can it be construed that the Prophet is the addressee.

The injunction of the Qur'an, regarding the prisoners of war is quite clear:

"Now when you meet (in war) those who are bent on denying the truth, smite their necks until you overcome them fully, and then tighten their bonds; but thereafter (set them free) either by act of grace or against ransom, so that the burden of war may be lifted, and thus (shall it be)." (Qur'an 47:4)

The Prophet, as the leader of the Muslim community, used his discretion and reached a safe and sound judgment. The action of the Prophet in setting the prisoners of war free on the occasion of badr, was not against the above

guidance, even if the above *ayah* (47:4) was revealed after the Battle of Badr. The action of the Prophet was in accordance with the 'Divine Law'. To surmise that the reference of the *ayah* in question (8:67-68) is to the captives taken by the Prophet at Badr, and that the addressee of these *ayaat* is the Prophet has serious implications:

It amounts to condemnation of greed of gain in the shape of ransom, which in fact, was far from the mind of the Muslims, let alone that of the Prophet.

The most appropriate rendering of these *ayaat* would be:

"(Let alone bloodshed) it is not befitting the Prophet to keep captives even (*hatta*) when he has thoroughly subdued the land. You (the Jews) look for the fleeting gains of this world, but Allah desires (the good of) the life to come! and Allah is Almighty, Wise". (Qur'an 8:67).

"Had it not been for the Divine Law (Kitab) from Allah, there would indeed have befallen you (the Jews) a tremendous chastisement on account of (the way of life) that you have adopted." (Qur'an 8:68)

15. *Ayah* 9:60

This *ayah* is generally rendered as follows:

"Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and for those who are in charge thereof, and for those whose hearts are to be won over, and for (redemption of) those in captivity, and for those who are in debt, and for the cause of Allah (*fi sabilillah*) and for the wayfarers."

The phrase '*fi sabeelillah*' occurs in not less than 60 *ayaat* in the Qur'an and at least in three *ayaat*, it occurs twice.

At the outset, it is to be noted that the *ayah* in question refers to '*zakat*' although this term is not specifically mentioned. The word used in the *ayah* is '*sadaqah*'. It is to be borne in mind that '*sadaqah*' has a wider connotation and the term '*zakat*' is covered by '*sadaqah*'. In the *ayah* in question, the reference is to '*zakat*' and not to '*sadaqah*', because the categories of the recipients is restricted. In case of '*sadaqah*', there is no restriction. The donor has the discretion to be judicious within the frame of Islamic teachings. In case of '*zakat*', however, which is not discretionary but obligatory, there is no such discretion. It has to be collected as a tax at a fixed rate by the state. Even the state has no discretion to utilize '*zakat*' amount for any purpose other than the prescribed ones.

The eight categories of the recipients are as follows:

1. '*Fuqara*': the indigent or the poor.
2. '*Masakeen*': the needy (other than the beggars) who hesitate to ask for help
3. '*Aamilin*': those who collect and distribute the '*zakat*'.
4. '*Moallafal qulub*' i.e. those whose hearts are to be won over.
5. '*Fi riqaab*': those who have to be redeemed. '*riqaab*' literally means neck. Here, neck symbolizes subjugation because it is the neck through which men as well as animals are controlled. Under this category, '*riqaab*' refers to those who are to be redeemed from bondage or captivity (such as slaves, prisoners etc). The Qur'an has regarded freeing of the neck as a 'path of ascent' (for an individual as well as for the society).

Freeing the neck has not only literal connotation such as redeeming the prisoners, helping the slaves to freedom etc, it also has a figurative connotation: those in bondage of ignorance, superstition or other unfavorable environments should be helped.

6. '*Fi gharimeen*' i.e. for those who are in debt.
7. '*Fi sabeelillah*' i.e. in the cause of Allah
8. '*Ibn as-sabeel*': i.e. the wayfarer.

Now coming to the seventh category, ie. '*fi sabeelillah*', it may be noted that the recipient is not mentioned, but a broad category is indicated. Some commentators have stipulated that the needy and stranded soldiers taking part in *Jihad* should alone be the recipients of '*zakat*'. On this basis, it is argued that if the restriction to soldiers is not observed, the categories will not be eight, but more. There is, however, no room to doubt that the very stipulation of eight categories of zakah recipients would be defeated if '*fi sabeelillah*' is not restricted to the needy and stranded soldiers taking part in Jihad. If we turn towards the great authorities, we see that there is difference of opinion among them, regarding the interpretation of the phrase '*fi sabeelillah*'. Some other commentators regard stranded and needy '*hujjaj*' (*Hajj* pilgrims) as the rightful recipients.

In fact, '*fi sabeelillah*' has wider connotation. It is definitely one of the eight main heads, and under each main head there can be several sub-heads, showing the rightful recipients of '*zakat*'. '*Fi sabeelillah*' cannot be restricted to the needy and the stranded soldiers or the '*hujjaj*'. All those who are struggling and striving, or who have emigrated for the cause of Allah, or who are teaching or fighting or engaged in the duties assigned to them by the Islamic state and thus unable to earn their ordinary living can safely be

regarded as the rightful recipients of 'zakat'. They will however, come under the main head.

16. Ayah 13:11

This *ayah* is generally rendered as follows:

“Verily Allah will never change the state or the condition of the people until they change it themselves.”

Literally, there is no corresponding Arabic word for 'state' or 'condition' in the *ayah*. According to the Arabic construction, that which 'Allah will not change' is not specified, it is kept as implied. The translators have, according to their own respective conjectures, provided the words 'state' or 'condition'. The phrase '*ma bi qoumin*' has been generally translated to refer to the condition. This translation, although not quite appropriate, is not incorrect. The translators have committed yet another mistake. The phrase '*ma bi anfusihim*' is also translated as the condition of the people. In fact '*ma bi anfusihim*' refers to one thing and '*ma bi qoumihim*' refers to another. But in the majority of translations, both these phrases are rendered as the same thing, i.e. 'condition'. The *ayah*, in fact, mentions two separate things: man's external condition and man's internal condition. The literal translation of '*ma bi anfusihim*' will be 'that which is within them.'

According to these translations the logical conclusion is that once a people has changed its condition, Allah will change it (condition). If they (the people) have already changed it, then what will Allah change? And conversely, if Allah changes the condition of the people, then how will the people change it? What is there for them to change? If the 'change of condition' is effected by Allah, then to claim that the change is the effect of the people becomes meaningless.

In fact, '*ma biqoumin*' refers to that which is with the community i.e. peace, prosperity and other bounties of Allah or the adversities with which the community is afflicted. Mere 'condition' of the people does not clarify whether the people are in prosperity or in adversity.

What is seen in the world is only reflection in a large scale of that which is happening within human minds.

The way of thinking of individual (or of the community) has a direct relation with their worldly prosperity or adversity.

Similarly, the meaning of '*maa bi anfusihim*' refers to that which is within the people themselves. This internal condition includes the condition of the heart, as well as the condition of morality. Here again, the condition can either

be virtuous or vicious.

“This statement has both a positive and a negative connotation i.e. God does not withdraw His blessings from men unless their inner selves become depraved. (8:53). Just as He does not bestow His blessings upon willful sinners, until they change their inner dispositions and become worthy of His grace. In its wider sense, this is an illustration of the Divine Law of cause and effect, (*sunnat Allah*) which dominates the lives of the individual and the communities, and makes the rise and fall of civilizations dependant on people’s moral qualities and the change in their ‘inner selves’ “.1

What is intended in this *ayah* is in case the people are in prosperity, Allah will not change their condition as long as they do not change and resort to impious thinking, or indulge in immoral acts. Similarly, if the people are in adversity, Allah will not improve their external condition unless they change their hearts and adopt righteous thinking and righteous acts.

It is interesting to note that ‘*basharah*’ (good tidings and promises of reward for good actions in this life) and ‘*nazarah*’ (warnings and threats of punishment for bad deeds), which are the two allied functions of the Qur’an, are beautifully joined together in this *ayah*. The key to prosperity and the key to adversity are given in the hand of the people, leaving it to themselves, to change their condition for better or for worse by their own thinking or their own actions.

The *ayah* in question also clarifies that the external condition of the people i.e. ‘*ma bi qoumin*’ is outside the control of man, whereas that which is in themselves i.e. ‘*ma bi anfusihim*’ is within the control of man. Man is made free to think and act as he likes.

Says the Qur’an:

“(O Man!) Whatever good happens to you is from Allah but whatever evil happens to you is from your own self.” (Qur’an 4:79)

It is only when man flouts Allah and pays no heed to Him that his own rebellion brings its own punishment. The punishment, however, is inflicted through the Divine process.

17. *Ayah* 17:60

“Behold! We told you ‘Verily, your Lord has a hold over all mankind: and the vision that We showed you was only to test men.’” (Qur’an 17:60)

Most of the commentators take ‘the vision’ as referring to the *Miraj*.

The reference to the *Miraj* is in the very first *ayah* of this *surah*. No vision

is involved therein.

One vision is referred to in the Qur'an. In the sixth year of *Hijrah*, the Prophet saw in a vision that he was entering the Holy Mosque, *Masjid al-Haram* and was performing '*tawwaf*' of Ka'bah. Accordingly, he marched toward Makkah with 1400 of his followers. The Quraish of Makkah did not allow him to perform *Umrah* and he had to return after entering into an agreement that they would allow him to perform *Umrah* the next year. Accordingly, the next year *Umrah* was performed. This is called *Umrah-ul-Qazah* i.e. the deferred *Umrah*. Thus the dream or the vision which the Prophet saw at Medina came true, although it was fulfilled late by one year. This vision and not the *Miraj* is referred to in the *ayah* in question.

18. *Ayah* 20:27

When Prophet Musa was ordered to go to the Pharaoh who had become exceedingly rebellious (Qur'an 20:24), Prophet Musa realized the difficulties of his mission. He prayed to Allah to expand his breast (Qur'an 20:25). The breast is considered to be the seat of knowledge and affections. Prophet Musa's prayer was for the gift of the highest intellectual insight. He also prayed to clear up and solve the difficult problems of expression (Qur'an 20:27), so that people of the Pharaoh may fully understand what he has to say.

The word '*lisani*' used in the *ayah* in question refers to speech, and not to tongue (part of the body), as generally interpreted.

It is generally believed that the Prophet Musa had an impediment in his speech and that he had the defect of stammering. The idiom '*ahlul uqdah*' which means 'solving a problem' is erroneously interpreted as removing a knot from the tongue. Each idiom is peculiar to its language and has to be interpreted according to its usage in the language. It may not be correct to associate the literal meaning of the components with the idiom. The literal meaning of '*ahlul uqdah*' will be to 'loosen a knot'.

Prophet Musa did not have any defect in his tongue nor did he stammer. He had no power of expression in the sense that he was not a good speaker. This fact is mentioned in the Qur'an when the Pharaoh asks his people whether he is not better than Musa, who cannot even express himself clearly (Qur'an 28:34). Similarly, Prophet Musa himself admits that his brother Harun was more fluent than himself (Qur'an 28:34). He also says about himself that he is not fluent in speech (Qur'an 26:13). This word very clearly denotes that Prophet Musa was not eloquent.

In some Israelite traditions, there is a mention that Prophet Musa, who was brought up in Pharaoh's palace, had put a burning coal in his mouth when he was a child. Since then, he had a defect in his tongue. Such traditions are not authentic.

19. Ayah 21:71

“We delivered him (Prophet Ibrahim) and Prophet Lut (his nephew) and directed them to the land which We have blessed for the nations.” (Qur’an 21:71)

Having the full awareness that the knowledge (realization of ‘tawheed’) has come to him from Allah which had not come, among others to his father (Qur’an 19:43), Prophet Ibrahim felt that it was his duty to convey the knowledge to them (ie. his father and others). He indulged in discussions. It was once during such a discussion that his father in anger, concern and sagacity suggested him to leave the place for a long period (Qur’an 19:46). Prophet Ibrahim agreed to keep away. (Qur’an 19:48)

It is very clearly mentioned in the *ayah* in question that the place where Prophet Ibrahim and his nephew, Prophet Lut migrated to, was a place blessed for nations. Some commentators have pointed out that this place was Syria. Abdullah Yousef Ali has also stated that the allusion is to “The land of Aram or Syria, which in its widest connotation includes Canaan or Palestine.”¹

Prophet Ibrahim, according to the Qur’an, said: “O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a barren valley, by Thy sacred house” (Qur’an 14:37).

This reference is to none other than Makkah. The Sacred House at Makkah is mentioned in the Qur’an as full of blessings for the nations (Qur’an 3:96). The general belief is that Prophet Ibrahim’s first wife began to grow jealous and demanded that Prophet Ibrahim abandon the two (the second wife *Hajira* and her son Ismail) in the desert. This belief adversely reflects on the character of Prophet Ibrahim. It was not befitting a great prophet to be a tool in the hands of a jealous wife, and to put the other with an infant son which was their only son at that time to suffering for no fault of their own.

The suggestion that the Prophet Ibrahim migrated with his nephew Lut, wife Hajira and the infant son Ismail to Makkah deserves consideration. This migration was a clear manifestation of Allah to save His beloved Prophet from the fire and it was made before the birth of the Prophet’s second son, Prophet Is-haq.

It is most probable that Hajira was not the name of the second wife of Prophet Ibrahim. She got the title Hajira (one who has migrated) as a distinction, for she and not Sarah accompanied Prophet Ibrahim in his migration from Canaan to Makkah.

20. Ayah 24: 11

The exegetes are almost unanimous that this *ayah* refers to a particular incident that occurred on the return of the Prophet from the expedition against Banu Mustaliq in about the year 6 H. The interpretation generally offered by the exegetes appears to be presumptuous, as it is linked with an event which itself has been considered on close scrutiny, to be baseless, surious, and fictitious. It is generally believed that the occasion of revelation helps to understand a particular *ayah*. In this instance case however, the so-called occasion of revelation actually hampers the understanding of the *ayah* and takes it away from the context. In fact the string of thought of *ayah* 11 is in continuation of the topic of *ayaat* 4 and 5 of the same *Surah*.

In *ayah* 3 those guilty of illicit practices are shut out of the marriage circle of chaste men and women.

In *ayah* 4 and 5 serious note is taken of people who put forward slanders about women without adequate evidence. Then the continuation is left off. In *ayaat* 6 to 10 the Qur'an enjoins the method of dealing with cases of married persons which are quite different from those of the outsiders.

Then there is a structural reversal and the contents of *ayaat* 11 to 13 are in continuation of the contents of *ayaat* 4 and 5, and it is said that the punishment will also apply to the slanderers even if they belong to a blood related group (*usbat*):

"Verily, those who would falsely accuse others of in chastity may be a blood related group (but O' you who are thus wronged) deem it not a bad thing for you; nay, it is good for you! (As for the slanderers) every one of them (will be accounted) all that he has earned by (thus) sinning; an awesome suffering awaits any of them who takes it upon himself to enhance this (sin)".

In *ayah* 11 the past tense has been used to show the meaning of present imperfect (*mudhari*). This is as per the Arabic grammar according to which in the following cases among others past tense renders the meaning of present imperfect:

- 1) Where an *ayah* begins with a past tense as in *Surah Al Nahl* (16) *ayah* 75. This *ayah* begins with '*dhuriba*' which is a past tense, and shows the meaning of present imperfect.
- 2) Where the past tense is followed by the 'relative pronoun' as in *Surah Al An'am* (6) *ayah* 159. Here the past tense '*farraqu*' is followed by the relative pronoun '*al-lazeen*'. Therefore it will produce the meaning of '*yafarraqun*'. If the past tense is kept in its original form, it will show as if split had already occurred during the life time of the Prophet which never occurred and is therefore, quite contrary to fact.
- 3) Where the past tense is followed by an exclamation or interjection as

in *Surah Al Hajj* (22) *ayah* 73. Here the past tense '*dhuriba*', is followed by '*ya ayyahan nas*'. It renders the meaning of present imperfect (*mudhari*) because the concerned example had not taken place at that time.

- 4) Where, the past tense is followed by the word '*haithu*' (wherever) as in *Surah Al Baqara* (2) *ayah* 191 where the past tense '*thaqiftuymuhum*', is followed by the word '*haithu*' rendering the meaning of present imperfect tense (*mudhari*). The same case is with *Surah Al A'raf* (7) *ayah* 161.
- 5) Where the past tense is followed by '*kullama*', (wherever) as in *Surah Al A'raf* (7) *ayah* 38, where the past tenses '*la' nat*' and '*dakhalat*' are followed by '*kullama*'. These verbs will give the meaning of present imperfect (*mudhari*).
- 6) Where, the past tense is used to bless some one, it shall give the meaning of present imperfect (*mudhari*) as in *ayah* 73 of *Surah Al Zumar* (39) where '*tibtum*' is a past tense, used as prayer, and no doubt that the acceptance of prayer belongs to the future.

According to Muhammad Asad "As is the case with all Qur'anic allusions to historical events, this one, too, is primarily meant to bring out an ethical proposition valid for all times and all social circumstances: and this is the reason why the grammatical construction of the above passage is such that the past-tense verbs occurring in *ayaat* 11-16 can be-and, I believe, should be - understood as denoting the present tense".¹

The word '*usbat*' is generally rendered as group, gang, band, troop etc., According to *Taj-al-Arus* "The term '*usbah*' signifies any group of people, of indeterminate number, banded together for a particular purpose (*Taj al-Arus*)".² The word '*usbat*' which is loosely translated as party or group, in fact refers to a limited group having blood ties from paternal side. '*Asbaat*' from the same root is used in *fiqh* (Muslim personal law) in connection with the rights of succession.

21. *Ayaat* 27: 16 to 20

These five *ayaat* are generally translated as follows:

Ayah 16 - Sulayman was Dawud's heir, and he said, "O people! We have been endowed with the understanding of the birds' language; we have been blessed with all kinds of things, a profound grace."

Ayah 17 - Mobilized for Sulayman were troops of jinns and humans, as well as the birds all subjugated.

Ayah 18 - Once when they approached the valley of ants, one ant said " O

you ants! go inside your houses, otherwise Sulayman and his troops may crush you un-intentionally”.

Ayah 19 - He smiled in amusement at her statement and prayed ‘My Lord! direct me to appreciate the blessings you bestowed upon me and my parents, and to work righteously that is pleasing to you and admit me into your mercy with your righteous servants.’

Ayah 20 - He inspected the birds and said ‘How come! I do not see Hud-hud (hoopoe), why is he absent?’

The above interpretation is perhaps due to the fact that the symbolic nature of the following six words occurring in the above *ayaat* is not properly determined.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>Mantaqul tair</i> | 2. <i>Al-jin</i> | 3. <i>Al-tair</i> |
| 4. <i>Wadi an naml</i> | 5. <i>Al-naml</i> | 6. <i>Al-hud hud</i> |

1. *Mantaqul tair* - It means military code or the terminology of military command.
2. *Al-jin* - In this *ayah* as well as in *ayaat* 34:12, 34:14, 27:39, 72:1 and 6:128 to 130, the word *Jinn* is used for tribals or people living in mountains.

In the Old Testament, it is mentioned that “Hiram, king of Tyre, sent messengers to David, and Cedar trees and, carpenters and masons. And they built David a house”. (2 Samuel 5:11)

Similarly it is mentioned that Prophet Sulayman informed Hiram: “My servants will be with your servants, and I will pay you wages for your servants according to whatever you say. For you know there is none among us who has skill to cut timber like the Sidonians”. (1 Kings, 5:6)

It is very clear that the persons who worked for Sulayman were humans and not super natural beings.

3. *Al-Tair*: The word ‘al-tair’ in *ayah* 17 is used for horses who are very fast in running i.e., fleet footed horses. In *ayah* 20 it is used for army.

“The mention of iron being made pliable for David in 34:10, and of coats of mail in the next *ayah*, 34:11 together with *ayah* 20 of this Surah (38) which speaks of the strengthening of his kingdom, clearly indicates martial might”.¹

4. *Wadi-an-namal*:- According to *Taj*, ‘wadi-an-namal’ was a valley between Jibrin and Asqalan.^{2 3 4}

5. *Naml* was “the name of a tribe in Syria. According to Qamus it is the name of a Tribe in ‘*wadi-an-naml*’. *Ibne-Kathir* in his *Tafseer* identifies ‘*Naml*’, “the lady of *Naml*” as belonging to the tribe of ‘*Banu Shisan*’.

It was possible to assign supernatural powers to the Prophet Sulayman under the shelter of faith and belief but what will be the justification to believe that the ant could identify the prophet?

6. *Hud-hud*:- *Hud-hud* was the name of a military Officer of Sulayman. The name of a prince of Midian in the days of King Sulayman himself was *Hud-hud*, and according to Arab tradition the name of the princess’ brother or father was also *Hud-hud*.¹ Dr.Mirza Abdul Fazal has described *Hud-hud* as one of the captains of Sulayman. The name *Hud-hud* has occurred a number of times in the Old Testament (1 Kings, 11:14, 20:1 and 33).

“It is quite possible that the above six words have been used parabolically, to stand for some thing quite different from what they generally mean”.²

22. *Ayah* 33: 37

In this *ayah* there is a reference to the conversation the Prophet had with his adopted son Zayd Bin Haris.

In almost all the translations, the first part is shown as the Prophet’s words addressed to Zayd; and while the address is not yet completed, the later part of the *ayah* is translated as if Allah is addressing the Prophet. This has resulted in changing the entire purport of the *ayah*, and creating a very undesirable impression in the minds of the readers.

The translation of this *ayah* is as follows:

“And when you said to him (Zayd) unto whom Allah had been gracious and to whom you had shown favor (by marrying your own cousin to him) ‘keep your wife to yourself and fear Allah and you did hide within yourself what Allah intended to bring to light and (you) did fear men (around you). Better it would have been for you to fear the (disapprobation of) Allah’”.

The Prophet had given his cousin, Zainab, in marriage to Zayd (who was a freed slave) in accordance with his noble intentions. This marriage which was sponsored by Prophet himself was the practical demonstration of equality in Islam. It was to bring home to the Muslim *Ummah* that no one loses status by entering into matrimony with a freed slave. It was to demonstrate that the attitude then prevalent was repugnant to the spirit of Islam. The marriage was performed with high and noble ideals. In actual practice, however, the marriage was a failure. Zayd in his sense of commitment to

Islamic teachings and his personal loyalty to the Prophet was reluctant to express the fact of incompatibility. He was wondering how to disclose that he was not in a position to save the marriage from breaking. He was afraid of the people around as to how they would react. This fear was not the fear of criticism against his self. He was fully conscious of the confidence reposed in him by the Prophet in the form of this marriage. He abhorred the idea of the dissolution of marriage which would give room to criticism against the basic concept of equality in Islam.

The Prophet was all the time advising Zayd not to resort to divorce. However, when the real facts came to his knowledge that it was Zaynab who was at fault, the Prophet allowed Zayd to break the marriage. He realized that Zaynab could not reconcile herself to the fact of incompatibility that she came from a noble family, and looked down upon her husband as a freed slave of her cousin. With such notions in the mind of the wife, it was no longer possible to save the marriage. The Prophet accepted the fact.

In this conversation the Prophet is addressing Zayd in retrospect. While acknowledging Zayd's good intention in not disclosing the actual position to him, the Prophet asks him why he had fear of men around him whereas Allah was more worthy (*ahaqq*) that he should stand in awe of Him.

If the latter part of the *ayah* is construed as if Allah is addressing the Prophet, as it is generally translated, it would mean that the Prophet, was harboring the intention of marrying Zaynab, while she was still in the wedlock with Zayd, and that he was afraid of the people around him and as if Allah was admonishing him (the Prophet). This wrong translation is nothing but sheer audacity on the part of the translators who attribute to him an idea unworthy of the dignity of a Prophet. It does not behove Muslims to accept it.

It is very strange that while the *ayah* is not yet completed the translators have changed the addressee. From the entire context it is very clear that the addressee throughout is exclusively Zayd.

Imam Qartabi and the learned scholar Moulana Habibur Rahman Kandhalvi (d. 1991) have subscribed to this view.¹

23. *Ayah* 37: 97

‘They said ‘build for him a furnace and cast him into the flaming fire’ (Qur’an 37:97)

The plan of the un-believers to burn Prophet Ibrahim at the stake is also mentioned in another *ayah*:

“Burn him and protect your gods, if you do (anything at all)” (Qur’an

21:68)

Prophet Ibrahim was guided by Allah and did not have faith in the idols which his people worshiped with Allah. To him, had come knowledge (realization) which had not reached his father (among others) (Qur'an 19:43). It was because of this, that Prophet Ibrahim frequently indulged in discussions and arguments with his father and with his people (Qur'an 6: 80).

In the Qur'an not less than nine such instances are mentioned.

During one such discussion Prophet Ibrahim said:

“By Allah! I shall surely devise a plot against your idols.” (21:57) and he broke the idols into pieces. He was brought before the people. There were arguments and counter arguments. When the un-believers could not argue any more, they expressed their intention to throw him into the fire, as mentioned in the *ayah* in question.

It is very clear that the un-believers merely expressed their desire to burn Prophet Ibrahim. There is no mention at all, in the Qur'an that the furnace was actually built and that Prophet Ibrahim was actually thrown therein.

The idea that Prophet Ibrahim was thrown into the fire and that the fire turned into a garden is borrowed from Talmud, wherein it is stated that Abraham was cast into it (the fire) where-upon the heat of the fire miraculously ceased and the pile turned into a sort of pleasant meadow. God himself went down from heaven to rescue him.:

There is a mention in the Qur'an that the people intended to plot against Prophet Ibrahim (Qur'an 21:70 and 37:98). It is quite obvious that the plot (*kaid*) was to implement their desire to burn Prophet Ibrahim. In the very *ayaat* respectively it is added that “We made them the worst losers” and that “We made them the most humiliated.”

The plot of the unbelievers was foiled not by any supernatural act involving a change in universal law as generally interpreted by the exegetes. In fact the Qur'an clearly announces: “Thou will find no change in Our ways (laws)” (Qur'an 17:77 and 33:62).

Prophet Ibrahim was saved from the plot of the un-believers in the same natural course as Prophet Jesus was saved from the cross and Prophet Muhammad (S) was saved from his foes who plotted to kill him by a joint attack on his life.

The observation of the Qur'an:

“We said O fire! be thou cool and (a means of) safety,” (Qur'an 2:69) need not be interpreted to bring in any supernatural element in the Divine

scheme of saving the Prophet from the intended furnace in the natural course. When there was a plot against Prophet Ibrahim the only way out, was to save him before the furnace was actually prepared. Thus the fire which would have burnt him, became cool and means of safety. For, because of this imminent furnace that Prophet Ibrahim had to migrate and was thus safe from the evil designs of the enemies. Thus the plot against Prophet Ibrahim was foiled and his life was saved.

24. *Ayah* 37: 142

The *ayaat* from 139 to 145 are generally translated with a preconceived notion that Prophet Yunus was actually swallowed by a giant fish.

Prophet Yunus when he encountered certain difficulties in his prophetic mission, ran away from Ninevah like a slave escaping from captivity. He was hasty and went off to take a ship; as if he could escape from the clutches of Allah. The ship was fully ladden and met foul weather. The sailors wanted to lighten the weight of the ship. According to the prevailing custom they cast lots and the lot fell on Prophet Yunus. Thus the sailors took Prophet Yunus and threw him into the sea. There are different versions of the story and the details differ but presently we are not concerned with them.

In the *ayah* in question it is mentioned that prophet Yunus was caught by a fish. The word used is 'faltaqama' which simply means 'caught with mouth'. 'Al-taqam-faha' as an idiom means 'kissed'. The rendering of 'altaqam' as swallowed is preposterous and fanciful.

In *ayaat* 143 and 144 it is mentioned that had he (Prophet Yunus) not been an expert swimmer he would have remained inside (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection:

"And had it not been that he was of those who swam hard, he would surely have remained in the belly thereof to the day when (men) shall be raised, (again) ". (Qur'an 37:143 and 144) Translation as in (Mirza Abul Fazl).

What is mentioned therein is that Allah saved him from entering the stomach of the fish. It was not necessary for prophet Yunus to enter the stomach of the fish so as to be saved.

After prophet Yunus was saved from the fish, the Qur'an says:

"Then We cast him on the bare shore; and he was tired." (Qur'an 37:145)

After escaping from the clutches of the giant fish, Prophet Yunus had to struggle hard and at last he reached the shore. In *ayah* 142 there is no room to read any supernatural phenomenon.

The exegetes have borrowed the notion that a giant fish had swallowed prophet Yunus, from the Bible:

“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” (Jonah 1:17)

“Parenthetically, the story is meant to show that, since, man has been created weak (Qur’an 4:28), even prophets are not immune against all the failings inherent in human nature.”¹

25. Ayaat 38: 21 to 24

One story is mentioned in the Qur’an in the above *ayaat*. The translation is as follows:

“Have you heard of the litigants who jumped over the wall into his (Prophet Dawud’s private) chamber? When they came before Dawud, he was startled! They said, ‘Fear not, we are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other. So judge between us with equity and be not un-just, and guide us to the even path’. (One of them said), ‘this is my brother. He has 99 ewes while I have (only) one. Yet he demands that I should give him my ewe under his care. He prevailed against me in argument.’ (Dawud) said: He is unjust in demanding your ewe to add to his (many) ewes. Many partners are surely unjust to one another, except those who believe and do the right, and how few are they?’ It suddenly occurred to Dawud that We had tried him. He asked for forgiveness of his Lord and fell down bowing, (in prostration) and turned (to Allah in repentance).”

While pronouncing the judgment, Prophet Dawud realized that Allah has tried him. He therefore asked for forgiveness of Allah and fell down bowing. Now the question arises as to what was actually the trial? What was the sin of omission or commission on the part of Dawud? What was the wrong he committed?

Some exegetes consider that since Dawud apart from being the Prophet of Allah, was also a king and that it was a part of his duty to be available to the complainants and to those who brought their disputes to him for his decision. As a Prophet he was in his seclusion, probably busy in chanting the hymns of his Lord. The disputants had to climb over the walls of his private chamber. The fact that he was not readily available to dispense justice and the parties seeking justice had to enter his private chamber climbing over the walls, was a mistake on his part which he realized and repented.

Others are of the opinion that while expressing his view that many business associates transgress against one another, Prophet Dawud entertained feelings of pride and self-righteousness which he instantly realized.

Some exegetes have suggested that the litigants were in fact two angels; who came to test Prophet Dawud and it was they who pointed out to Dawud that he entertained feelings of pride.

According to Ahmed Ali, the reference is to One God and many gods i.e., idolatry. Prophet Dawud did not understand it at once. When he did, he asked for forgiveness.¹

Some have suggested that Prophet Dawud realized his mistake in thinking that the angels were men who came to attack him.

There is no indication whatsoever in the Qur'an that the intruders were angels. Moreover, if they were angels, there was no necessity for them to climb over the wall. The words climbed over the mehrab preclude the possibility that the litigants were angels.

Some exegetes are of opinion that the intruders came with the criminal intention of killing Prophet Dawud and when they found him awake, they pretended as if they were two disputants. Prophet Dawud wanted to kill them but refrained and realized his mistake. This explanation is also not supported by the Qur'an.

The actual point on which Prophet Dawud seems to have realized his lapse was that, he was rather hasty in expressing his views. After giving his preliminary remarks he was going to pronounce his decision. At this stage he realized that he heard only one of the litigants and not given an opportunity to the other person to represent his point of view. According to the complainant, the defendant, alleged to be the owner of 99 ewes had prevailed against the complainant in arguments. It was but necessary for Prophet Dawud to ascertain the facts from the defendant as well and also to know as to what were his arguments in demanding the one ewe from the complainant to be kept under his own care. It is the basic principle of dispensing justice to hear both the parties to their satisfaction before delivering judgment. Prophet Dawud realized this lapse and asked Allah for His forgiveness. Since Prophet Dawud realized his mistake before delivering judgment, Allah pardoned him.

26. *Ayah* 38:34

The *ayah* is usually translated as follows:

“We surely tested or tried Sulayman and laid upon his throne a body, soulless (*jasad*). So he turned to Allah” (Qur'an 38:34)

The question arises as to what this body (*jasad*) was which was laid on the throne of Sulayman?

The exegetes of the Qur'an from earlier centuries to the present day are not unanimous on the identification of the 'body' and on the interpretation of this *ayah*.

“To explain this *ayah*, some of the commentators advance the most fantastic stories, almost all of them going back to Talmudic sources. Razi rejects them all, maintaining that they are unworthy of serious consideration.

“Instead, he plausibly suggests that the body (*jasad*) upon Solomon’s throne is an allusion to his own body, and --- metonymically --- to his kingly power, which was bound to remain ‘lifeless’ so long as it was not inspired by God-willed ethical values. (It is to be borne in mind that in classical Arabic a person utterly weakened by illness, worry or fear, or devoid of moral values, is often described as a ‘body without a soul’). In other words, Solomon’s early trial consisted in his inheriting no more than a kingly position, and it rested upon him to endow that position with spiritual essence and meaning”. ¹

Some exegetes have preferred to be silent on this issue on the plea that when the Qur’an has not elaborated as to whose body it was, it was not proper for them to go deeper into the matter.

Other scholars have offered their views. The differences between them are not minor. The interpretations suggested by them can be broadly categorized as follows:

(i). A crippled son was born to Prophet Sulayman who was brought and placed on his throne. This interpretation offered by some earlier exegetes has been adopted and supported by Moulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi.²

Says Dr. Syed Abdul Latif:

“We laid on his (Sulayman’s) throne a body (of an undeveloped child) while he was looking forward to having a number of issues without invoking Divine aid.”³

This interpretation is based on a tradition included in Sahih Bukhari and narrated by Abu Huraira that Prophet Sulayman went to seventy of his wives in one night with the intention that he would have a son from each of them. Since he did not vest the fulfillment of his desire upon the will of Allah, i.e., he did not say ‘*insha-Allah*’, only one of his wife was caused by Allah to bear a child, and that was still-born. It is not necessary to offer any comment on the tradition. It may however, be noted that the tradition ends here and there is no mention in the tradition of laying the body of this undeveloped son on the throne of Sulayman. This tradition is joined to the *ayah* in question without any proper authority or reasoning.

(ii) Sulayman himself due to his advanced age and illness was sitting on the throne as body without life.

“Then We tested Sulayman making him fall dead-tired fainting on his

throne.”¹

This interpretation cannot be accepted as the question of trying Sulayman by laying his own body on his throne, does not arise.

(iii) The reference is to Sulayman’s son who succeeded him and was incapable of ruling properly.

This interpretation is suggested by the well known Qur’anic *Maariful Qur’an*. This interpretation is not acceptable as what happened after King Sulayman cannot be regarded as a test for him.

(iv) “We placed in his (Sulayman’s) domain material wealth”¹. This interpretation is also subscribed by Abdullah Yusuf Ali as follows:

“His (Sulayman’s) earthly power, great as it was, was like a body without soul, unless it was vivified by God’s spirit.”²

(v) “That body (jasad) or person was Ad-O-Nijah (son of David born of Haggith) who had decided to have himself crowned as king when David lay ill in old age, even though David had nominated Soloman as his successor. So Nathan the Prophet told Bath-Sheba, mother of Soloman, about Ad-O-Nijah’s action, and informed King David who then ordered that Soloman be seated upon his throne, and Ad-O-Nijah was over-thrown. See the Bible: 1 Kings³!” (Page 390).

This interpretation appears to be more reasonable and acceptable.

27. Ayah 40: 46

The *ayah* has generally been rendered as follows:

“In front of the fire will they be brought morning and evening and (the sentence will be) on the Day that judgement will be established, caste ye the people of Pharoah into the severest penalty.” (Qur’an 40: 46)

This interpretation has led some exegetes to believe that Fir’aun and his people who after death and before the Day of judgment, are in ‘*barzakh*’, are suffering the punishment of fire every morning and evening. They have come to the conclusion that men are exposed to torment in ‘*barzakh*’.

‘*Barzakh*’ is a state, or an interval between an individual’s death and the resurrection. During this period men will have no consciousness and hence, will not undergo any suffering.

There is no indication at all, in the *ayah* in question, that the *Fir’aun* and his people will be brought before the fire. The messengers of Allah, as a part of their prophetic mission warn their people, day in and day out that if the law of Allah is disregarded, they will be committed to the fire of hell. They

present the picture of Hell to their people. This presentation is described by the word '*yurazuna alaiha*'. '*Yurazuna alaiha*' does not mean that they (Fir'aun and his people) are actually being exposed to fire. It does not mean that they are actually brought in front of fire or, that the actual fire of hell is brought in front of them. It only means that they (Fir'aun and his people) had been warned (during their life-time) of the fire, day in and day out, which they did not heed. The central theme of this *ayah* is that Fir'aun and his people having been warned in vain, shall be condemned to the most severe torment on the Day of Judgment.

The most appropriate rendering of this *ayah* will be:

“ Of the fire (of the hereafter) they had been warned (in vain), day in and day out; for on the Day of Judgment (Allah will say) make *Fir'aun's* people enter upon most severe suffering.” (Qur'an 40: 46)

Muhammad Asad subscribes to the above view and has rendered the above *ayah* as follows:

“ The fire (of the hereafter --- that fire) which they had been made to contemplate (in vain) morning and evening; for on the Day when the Last Hour dawns (God will say) Make Pharaoh's folk enter upon suffering most severe” (Qur'an 40: 46).

28. *Ayah* 43:86

This *ayah* has generally been rendered as follows:

“And those whom they invoke besides Allah (for intercession) have no power to intercede; he only (has the power to intercede) who bears witness to the Truth, and they know him”.

There are different aspects in this *ayah* that require our attention. Some classical exegetes, based on the belief that '*Illa man shahida bill haqq wa hum yalamun*' refers to the person or persons who can intercede on the Day of Judgment, differed with one another. According to them, to enable a person to intercede, both the qualifications are necessary: (i) to bear witness to the Truth and, (ii) (to bear witness) with full knowledge.

Some exegetes have not accepted this interpretation. They argue that '*man shahida*' is singular and '*hum yalamun*' is plural. Both parts i.e., '*man shahida*' and '*hum yalamun*' cannot be construed as qualifications or conditions for intercession. They have therefore, construed that 'he who bears witness to the Truth' (*man shahida*) refers to Prophet Muhammad (S), who renewed the Gospel of Unity. According to them, '*hum*' refers to the Quraish, who had the full knowledge of the reputation of the Prophet as '*Al-Ameen*'.

This popular interpretation, if accepted, leads to the obvious situation where the power to intercede can be exercised even by persons, other than the prophets such as the holy saints, (who in their life-time were men of faith), and who some invoke besides Allah.

What is discussed is not, perhaps the qualification of the person who can plead for mercy but of those on whose behalf intercession is sought for. '*Illaman shahida bil haqq wa hum yalamun*' refers to those for whom intercession is sought, and not to those who can plead for mercy. The power to intercede cannot be exercised except for those who, in their life-time, bore witness to the Truth and were aware that Allah is one. It is made very clear, in the Qur'an, that on the Day of Judgment Allah will not permit to intercede on behalf of anyone except for whom Allah has given permission. Says the Qur'an:

"On that Day intercession shall not benefit any one except him in whose case (Allah) the Most Gracious will have granted permission, and whose word (of faith or of repentance) is acceptable to Him." (Qur'an 20:109)

In view of the above, the following rendering of the *ayah* in question appears to be most appropriate:

"And those (men) whom some invoke beside Allah, have it not within their authority to intercede (on the Day of Judgment) for any but those who have (in their life-time) testified the Truth and have been (God) conscious". (Qur'an 43:86).

29. *Ayah* 45:17

And we granted them clear signs in the matter, '*amar*'. It was only after knowledge had been granted to them that they fell into schisms through insolent envy. Verily thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment in respect of that wherein they had differed.

The exegetes in general have cursorily interpreted the word '*al-amar*' in a limited sense to mean the matters of religion pertaining to the Israelites, and the schisms (differences) is referred to as the differences regarding the teaching of Judaism. In fact '*al-amar*' refers to the message given through the Prophet Mohammed (S). This is made very clear in the middle of the *ayah* where the fact is mentioned that the Jews after the knowledge was granted to them (in the shape of Qur'an) differed among themselves. Some of them opposed the Prophet through sheer envy and spite and not through any ambiguity or obscurity in the Divine message, (the Qur'an).

During the Prophet's time the people of the Book, specially the Jews differed among themselves regarding the teachings of the Qur'an. They could not oppose the clear teachings contained therein which were free of any ambiguity. They differed only due to envy and false prestige. They were

having false notions about the finality of their own Books. They were also having particular inclinations towards their Books. (See captivating *ayah* 3:7).

In the very next *ayah* the reference to the Qur'an is direct and the meaning of '*al-amar*' is made very clear. The word *sharia* (Qur'an 45:18) can be rendered as the 'right Way of religion'. The word '*sharia*' acquired the present meaning in the post-Qur'anic period. In *ayah* 45:18 the word '*shariah*' has a wider meaning than the legal provisions.

30. *Ayah* 55: 13

This *Ayah* has been used 31 times in *Surah Ar-Rahman*¹ and has been generally translated as follows:

"Then which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?"

In almost all the translations the word '*ala*' in the *ayah* has been rendered as favor, benefit etc. Similarly the *ayah* 53:55 has also been rendered as follows:

"Then which of the favours of your Lord (O men and *Jin*!) will you dispute about?" (Qur'an 53:55).

There is a general belief about this oft-repeated *ayaat* 55:13, that its purpose is to impress upon man. Allah's favors lavished upon man and *Jins*. The general interpretation is that Allah has enumerated the favors, and then admonished them by posing a question as to which of the favors will they deny. For example, in *ayaat* 10 to 12, the benefits bestowed by Allah are enumerated as follows:

'It is He who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures: Therein is the fruit and date-palms, producing spathes (enclosing dates); also corn, with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder and fragrant herbs.' Then the 'question' follows:

"Then which of the 'favours' of your Lord you will deny"

There is no difficulty where this *ayah* is followed by such *ayaat* as the above, mentioning various benefits bestowed by Allah. The difficulty, however, arises where *ayahs* contain a different note, not of mentioning benefits and favours but of threatenings such as:

"On you will be sent a flame of fire (to burn) and a smoke (to choke): No defense will you have." (Qur'an 55:35)

(Or)

"When the sky is rent, and when the heaven will be rent as under and

will become red like grease". (Qur'an 55:37)

(Or)

"The day (when) no question will be asked of man or jinn as to their sins. (Denoting that Allah will be fully aware of their sins)" (Qur'an 55:39)

(Or)

"The sinners will be recognized (or identified) by their marks and they will be seized by their fore-lock, and their feet." (Qur'an 55: 41)

(Or)

"(Allah will say), 'this is the Hell which the sinners denied (indicating that the Hell will be abode of the sinners).'" (Qur'an 55: 43)

(Or)

"The sinners will go round and round between it (hell) and fierce boiling water". (Qur'an 55:44).

All the above *ayaat* are also followed by the *ayah* in question, if the *ayah* in question is rendered as: 'then which of the 'favour' of your Lord will you deny', then all the warnings and threatenings will have to be construed as favours.

Most of the commentators sticking to the rendering of the word '*ala*' as favor or bounty of Allah have tried in vain to prove that Allah's concern for dispensing justice is itself His favour.

Dispensing of justice may be a favor of Allah for those who have a belief in Allah and do righteous deeds. The threats in the above *ayaat* however, are addressed to the sinners. As such these threats by no stretch of imagination can be interpreted as bounties of Allah. According to the eminent commentator Ibn Jareer Tabari (d. 310 H), the meaning of '*ala*' in the *ayah* in question is authority, power or 'competence'. Similarly, the renowned commentator Fakhruddin Raazi, while commenting on this *ayah*, questions as to how the creation of *jinn* from flame or fire can be interpreted as a bounty of Allah and concludes:

'This *ayah* is to express the authority (of Allah) and not (His) bounties'. '*Qudrat*' is the might and majesty of Allah in every act of His

creation. Similarly, while commenting on *ayah* 23 of the same *Surah*, Raazi observes:

‘This is a description of wonders (marvels) of Allah, not the description of (His) bounties.’

The renowned Qur’anic Scholar Moulana Abdullah Imadi discusses this *ayah* in detail and concludes that the Arabic word (*ala*) conveys the sense of ‘*qudrat*’ (power and authority) and not bounty. He substantiates his argument by profusely quoting from pre Islamic Arab poetry wherein the word ‘*ala*’ conveys the meaning of ‘*qudrat*’ or attributes.¹ The same meaning are applicable in this *ayah* also.

Mirza Abul Fazl in his English translation of the Qur’an has rendered the *ayah* in question into English as follows:

“Which then of the power of your Lord will ye call a lie?”²

It is thus clear that the purpose of this oft repeated *ayah* is to impress Allah’s powers displayed throughout the universe. ‘*Ala*’ is also used in *ayah* 7:69. In this *ayah* also ‘*ala*’ stands for wondrous works of Allah and not for his bounties.

It is also to be noted that the Qur’an has used the word ‘*niamah*’ for bounties and favors such as in *ayaat* 16:18 and 16:81. It is the ‘beauty of the Qur’an that there are no synonyms therein. Each word used conveys a definite meaning which no other word can convey. *Ala*, therefore, is not a synonym of ‘*niamat*’.

There is another *ayah* in the Qur’an which conveys the same idea:

“And He shows you His signs: then which of the sign of Allah shall you deny” (Qur’an 40:81).

There is one more subtle point in this *ayah* which invites our attention. “Both the pronoun ‘your’ and the verb ‘will you deny’ are in the Arabic in the Dual Number. The whole *Surah* is a symphony of ‘duality’, which leads up to Unity..... The things and concepts mentioned in this *Surah* are in pairs.: man and outer nature, sun and moon, herbs and trees, heaven and earth, fruit and corn, human food and fodder for cattle, things nourishing and things sweet smelling, and so on throughout the *surah*”.¹

The mention of man and *jinn* addressed in this *Surah* jointly, therefore, is also a part of the symphony of ‘duality’.

31. *Ayah* 56: 79

The literal translation of this *ayah* will be:

“Which, (the Qur’an) none touches except those who are clean”.

This *ayah* is usually translated as an injunction that no one should touch the Qur’an without satisfying ablution requirements. In fact the style and form of this *ayah* is not imperative. The content of this *ayah* is only a statement of fact.

When the Qur’an is approached objectively and with an open mind, Allah will grant to the sincere inquirer knowledge of the universal guidance. The Qur’an meets its reader at his (the reader’s) own level of comprehension and sincerity. Only the sincere seekers of truth without any pre-conceived notions or obstinacy can fully grasp the teachings of the Qur’an. ‘*Mutaharoon*’ in this *ayah* therefore means those whose hearts are clean. The Qur’an rivets the reader’s attention and when one reads it carefully, it influences profoundly. The statement of fact made in this *ayah* can be interpreted as a condition imposed by the Qur’an for its understanding, namely that the reader should read it with an open mind ie. he should divest his mind of previous notions, before reading the Qur’an. This pre-requisite for a person to benefit from the Qur’an, demands that the person concerned should have a clean, un-biased mind. There cannot be a more reasonable condition for an impartial study.

Says Sir Nizam Jung:

“The attitude of the reader towards the Qur’an is not to be that of a critic sitting down with the avowed object of writing an article for a literary magazine, or a paragraph for the booknote column of a journal. Nor should it be that of a Doctor of Theology with a mind heavily laden with cumbersome learning and prepossessed in favor of some one system and prejudiced against all others. All sacred books have a natural appeal in them, and the appeal is to unsophisticated minds. Go to them with an open mind and a clean heart, and you will not fail to find something good in them - the spirit of good, at any rate. But, for the Qur’an, it claims something more than this, namely, an extraordinary breadth of vision, truth to nature, insistence on practical righteousness while teaching man to live according to nature. Get rid also of the nebulous belief that it is the mystical language of heaven, above and beyond human comprehension, and you will find it a human book sent for human guidance in this life -- -through which lies the way to heaven or hell”.¹

Similarly Maulana Maududi observes:

“Any one who really wishes to understand the Qur’an, irrespective of

whether or not he believes in it, must divest his mind, as far as possible, of every pre-conceived notion, and prejudice, in order to embark upon his study with an open mind. Any one who begins to study the Qur'an with a set of pre-conceived ideas, is likely to read those very ideas into the Book. No book can be profitably studied with this kind of attitude, let alone the Qur'an, which refuses to open its treasure-house to such readers".¹

To render '*mutaharoon*' as those whose hearts are clean is not far fetched. The root '*tahara*', with all its derivatives has occurred 31 times in the Qur'an. Except at places where it is used for physical purity, at all other places it is used for purity of heart, or of character etc. For example, *ayah* 9:103 etc.

The word '*yamassahu*' is derived from the root '*massa*' meaning to have contact. The word '*la yamassahu*' thus means; none will have any closeness or contact (with the teachings of the Qur'an).² Various derivatives of the root '*massa*' have been used not less than 61 times in the Qur'an. The derivatives have been used to mean touching (affliction or calamity) (twice in *ayaat* 10:12, 12:88 etc.), touching of old age (Qur'an 15:51) touched (afflicted) by *Satan* (Qur'an 38:41), 'touching' of chastisement (Qur'an 21:46) touching of good fortune (Qur'an 3:120). Nowhere is this word used to imply physical touch. It is, therefore, quite obvious that the *ayah* in question can be rendered as:

(With) which (the Qur'an) no one will have any contact except those who are clean (at heart).

In other words, only those will have closeness to the Qur'an, who earnestly seek to understand it, and none will have proximity to the (teaching) of the Qur'an if his heart is not like a clean slate. This statement is in conformity with another declaration that the Qur'an is guidance for all the God-conscious (*muttaqeen*) - (Qur'an 2:2). There are, as if locks, on the hearts of those who are not earnest and thus have become impervious to every argument and evidence. Says the Qur'an:

"Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up by them? " (Qur'an 47: 24).

This is a most reasonable demand that the Qur'an makes. This condition is equally applicable to any discipline or mundane teachings.

The popular interpretation of this *ayah* imposes a restriction, specially on non-believers, which is not actually intended. It virtually amounts to preventing people from studying the Divine message which in fact is a salvation for mankind.

As far as the believer is concerned, it goes without saying that he should not touch the Qur'an without ritual purification i.e., ablution. To the Muslims throughout the world, every word of the Qur'an is from Allah, and, therefore, it is the most sacred book for them.

Muslims feel obliged to touch or read the Qur'an when they are clean in body, mind, thought and intention. This is a universal practice which is understandable and justifiable. In the *ayah* in question, however, the general restriction (on Muslims or non-Muslims) is not imposed that they should not physically touch it unless they are bodily clean.

32. *Ayaat* 105: 3 and 4

Ayaat No 3 and 4 have been generally clubbed and translated together as:

"Allah sent against them [flights](#) of birds which struck them with stones of baked clay."

This *Surah* refers to an event that happened in 570 A.D. Yemen was then governed by the Abyssinians. Abraha Ashram, the Christian viceroy of Yemen, had erected a great cathedral at Sana as a rival of *Kaaba*. When the importance of *Kaaba* was not affected, Abraha, during the *Hajj* season invaded Makkah with a strong army which included a number of elephants. He intended to destroy *Kaaba*. No defense was offered by the Makkans, as the invading army was too strong for them, and they retired to the hills in the vicinity of Mina where Abraha's army was camping. Abraha's army was destroyed and thus he could not succeed in his evil design. Allah protected His house and the Christian army not only retreated after considerable loss, but was destroyed.

The fact needs to be kept in mind that the incident relates to a period before the advent of Islam, when Christianity was the latest and the only '*Deen*' of Allah. At that stage, *Kaaba* housed no less than 360 idols. It was a place of worship for the idolators. In fact, the infidels of Makkah were greater unbelievers than the Christians, who at least were the 'People of the Book.' However, as '*Kaaba*' was originally built for the exclusive worship of Allah and was soon to be restored to its original position, Allah protected it.

The narration of the Qur'an, in its usual terse and pithy way is quite clear. In fact *ayaat* 3 and 4 are quite independent of each other. The fact that *ayah* mentioning the pelting of stones (*ayah* 4) just succeeds the *ayah* which mentions the swarms of birds (*ayah* 3) led the exegetes to the conclusion that the stones were dropped by the birds. The general tendency of looking for miracles played its part. The exegetes have clubbed both the *ayaat* together and built up a story with a miracle as its central theme. The so-called miracle consisted in the birds coming in large flocks and dropping stones at the army of Abraha which supposedly caused destruction of the army. If *ayah* 3 and 4 are considered separately and if it is understood that the Makkans are the subject of '*tarmihim*' in *ayah* 4, then there is no need of all the unnecessary interpretations. It is unfair to the Qur'an to see presumptuous miracles in its

simple teachings.

For the correct understanding of *ayah* 3, it is necessary to have a clear idea about a phenomenon which was generally observed in ancient times. Whenever the armies marched, the carnivorous birds followed the armies. In the first instance, the slaughtering of animals and preparations of food in the open attracted carnivorous birds. Moreover, the birds instinctively knew in advance, that corpses will be available to them and hence followed the armies. The Arab chronicles have described that whenever a big army used to advance, flocks of carnivorous birds would follow it. The famous Arab poet *Nabigha al-Dhubyani* (d. 640) says in praise of an army that “along its banner flocks of birds follow”. Similarly the famous Arab poet Abu Nivas says: “Birds are with the army of my hero for they (the birds) are sure of his victory”. The battle of Jamal was fought at Basra in 36 Hijri. According to Tabari, the same day it was known in far off places of Hejaz because flocks of birds were found flying hither and thither with parts of human limbs.

This phenomenon is referred to in *ayah* 3 just to mention that the army of Abraha was of a large size, sufficient to attract swarms of birds.

Ayah 4 is independent and the subject of ‘*tarmi*’ (threw) is not birds as generally understood but ‘you’ (which is also the subject of seen ‘*tara*’) occurring in *ayah* 1. The *Surah* is addressed to the Makkans (or to the tribes of Quraish) who were eyewitnesses of the Abyssinian campaign against Makkah.¹ The word ‘*tarmi*’ is crucial and makes the whole picture clearer. *Ayah* 4 thus indicates as follows:

“You resorted to pelting with clay stones (at the ‘people of the elephants’)”.

It is reported that when Abraha’s men had driven away his 100 camels, Abdul Muttalib approached Abraha for their release. Abraha sarcastically asked him how he was representing in respect of a small matter when the safety of *Kaaba* itself was at stake. Abdul Muttalib replied that he was concerned about his camels, whereas the security of *Kaaba* was the responsibility of Him to whom it (*Kaaba*) belonged.

The references to the historical incident are found in Arab poetry which has survived and are available to us. The early historians Waqidi (d.207/822) and Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833) have also reported the incident.

Taking into consideration various reports that have come down to us from different sources, the following picture of events appears to be most probable:

The inhabitants of Makkah realized that they were too weak to directly oppose the strong invading army. They were terribly afraid to face an army with war elephants. In their despair, the Quraish under the leadership of

Abdul Muttalib, decided not to have a direct conflict with the strong army of Abraha.

Abdul Muttalib after giving the impression during his meeting with Abraha, that he was not going to defend *Kaaba*, as a strategic step, left the city with his tribe, and fled to the neighboring hills. The Quraish took position in the hills nearest to Abraha's army and collected heaps of stones.

As Abraha's army marched with confidence that there was none to oppose it, the Makkans started pelting stones at it. Sudden and un-expected showers of stones took Abraha's army unawares. The elephants turned back and trampled over the panic-stricken retreating army which was in great confusion and disorder. This resulted in rendering the entire army like 'eaten straw and stubble found in the dung of the animals,' which is clear from the last *ayah* of the *Surah*. The treacherous plan of Abraha to destroy *Kaaba* was thus foiled.

In this *Surah* Allah, to invite Quraish to accept '*tawhid*' as a creed, reminded them of His special favor bestowed upon them.

The word '*tarmi*' does not convey the sense of dropping from the beaks of birds. To express dropping of stones from a high altitude, the word '*amtarna*' is used in the Qur'an c.f., 7: 84 and 11: 82. The renderings of the latter *ayah* is as follows:

"When Our decree came to pass, We turned (the cities) up side down and rained thereon stones of backed clay piled up." (Qur'an 11: 82)

Allama Hameeduddin Farahi¹ Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi² and Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi³ have also subscribed to this view.

Allama Farahi has gone to the extent of saying that the ritual '*rammi jamar*' performed as a part of the *Hajj*, is reminiscent of the pelting of stones resorted to near Mina in the year of the elephant (during the *Hajj*).⁴

Here this important ritual of the *Hajj* requires clarification:

During the last day of '*Hajj*', the pilgrims are required to cast stones at certain fixed places. Of the three *Jamras*, the nearest to *Kaaba* is called *Jamra Aqaba* being situated on the Aqaba; the second *Jamra* '*wasta*' or the middle *Jamra*, is near the Mosque of Mina, and a little further on is the third, the *Jamra Sughra*, or the smallest *Jamra*. The origin of the other practices performed during '*Hajj*' are traceable to the Prophet Ibrahim or his wife Hajira and everyone carries with it some significance. The practice of '*rammi jamar*' is, however, reminiscent of the spectacular strategy of the Quraish, under the leadership of Abdul Muttalib resorted to defend *Kaaba*.

In this *Surah* the addressee is not the Prophet as generally understood but those who had witnessed the historical event. The purpose is not to console the Prophet but to remind the Arabs to be grateful to Allah who for the sake of the safety of His house saved their city.

B. CAPTIVATING WORDS

1. *Abada*

The word '*abada*' has been loosely rendered into English as 'forever' or as eternal. In fact by this word a very long and unspecified period (aeons) without a break is implied.

The word '*abada*' is used 28 times in the Qur'an.¹ In 11 *ayaat* this word is used as a part of the phrase '*Khalidina fiha abada*' out of which in three *ayaat* (4: 169, 33: 65 and 72: 23), it is mentioned that those who reject faith and disobey Allah, for them is the fire of Hell, therein they will live for a very long time.. Similarly, in other 8 *ayaat* (4: 57, 4: 122, 5: 119, 9: 22, 9: 100, 64: 9, 65: 11 and 98: 8), it is mentioned that those who believe in Allah and do deeds of righteousness, will be admitted into gardens (of heaven) to dwell therein for a very long time.

If the popular rendering of the word 'forever' is accepted, "we shall have to face the thought of 'duality' or a multiplicity of undying units possessing or claiming the quality of co-existence in eternity with God, a thought running counter to the Qur'anic concept of God as also the assertion of the Qur'an that all created objects shall have an end one day. Surely Hell and Heaven enter the list".¹

The fact that the transgressors will remain in Hell for ages (and not forever) is made very clear in *ayah* 78: 23, wherein a different word '*haqaban*' is used. The root '*haqaba*' is used for a period of eighty years and it also denotes a very long period of time (ages) or aeons. The same word '*haqaba*' is also used in the *ayah* 18:60 where again it denotes a very long period of time.

According to Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, there is no such thing as eternal damnation in Islam. "The word eternity used in certain *ayaat* relating to Hell is explained by the Qur'an itself to mean only a period of time. (Qur'an 78: 23)".²

'*Abada*' is also used in the Qur'an to mean 'never' as in 9: 108, 18: 20 and 18: 57. In *ayaat* 5: 24, 9: 83 and 24: 17, however, the word '*abada*' is used to mean 'by no means', 'under no circumstances', 'not at all' etc.

From the *ayah* 24: 4 also it is evident that the word '*abada*' is not used for an unlimited period. In this *ayah* there is an injunction that the testimony of those who defame chaste women, should not be accepted (*abada*)

afterwards. In the very next *ayah*, exception is allowed for those who thereafter repent and reform themselves. Thus the word '*abada*' cannot be used to mean 'forever'.

2. *Islah* and *Fasaad*

Islah:

Islah is derived from the root '*salaha*', meaning to be right, good, honest, upright.

The meaning of the word '*islah*' is reformation. It signifies behavior that is righteous, just and dignified. In the Qur'an, it refers to reformation both of one's own self (Qur'an 3: 89), and of others (Qur'an 26: 19). Those who act righteously i.e., perform '*aamal-e-salih*' (Qur'an 2: 62), are called '*salihin*' and those who reform others are called '*muslihin*' or '*muslihun*'.

The reformation of the self is expressed by good deeds i.e. '*aamal-e-salih*'. In the Qur'anic usage, '*aamal-e-salih*' means righteous deed. It is often used in the Qur'an with '*Iman*' and both are regarded as condition for success in this world as well as in the hereafter. According to the Qur'an, the characteristics of '*salihin*' are that:

"They believe in Allah and the last day, enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency vie with one another in good deeds". (Qur'an 3: 111)

With reference to society, the Qur'an uses the word '*islah*' in the sense of restoration of order (Qur'an 7: 56) peace-making, promotion of good will (Qur'an 2: 132 and 4: 114) or improvement of one's lot (Qur'an 2: 220).

Fasaad:

In the Qur'an, '*fasaad*' is used against the word '*islah*'. It means creating confusion and exploiting weaker sections of society by following a path, other than the path of Allah..

'*Fasaad*' is derived from the root '*fasada*', meaning to be corrupted. The literal meaning of '*al-fasaad*' is corruption, confusion and disorder. The use of the word '*fasaad*' in the Qur'an is mostly in conjunction with the word '*arz*' (i.e. the land, the earth). In two *ayaat* of the Qur'an the word '*fasaad*' is used once in conjunction with 'land and sea' (Qur'an 30: 41), and once in conjunction with 'cities' (Qur'an 89: 12). Here also *fasaad* is used to denote corruption on earth. Thus it means creating mischief, corruption or violence on earth.

'*Fasaad*' is thus opposite of '*aman*' i.e., peace. '*Fasaad*' also means to exceed the limits of decency in social life. '*Fasaad*' is to adopt a way in public

life which is against the will of Allah and to contravene the Divine injunctions. Allah is the absolute Lord of the universe. *Fasaad* is defying His authority by committing to or associating with worldly authorities. '*Fasaad*' is used in the Qur'an as opposite of reform (*islah*) (Qur'an 7: 56, 27: 48 etc.).

When human beings spread '*fasaad*' on earth, Allah in His Mercy sends Messengers (*Rusul*) who show the correct and straight path to humanity. They introduce reform and restore order.

According to the Qur'an, killing a person for spreading corruption (*fasaad*) on earth was allowed to the people of Israel (Qur'an 5: 32). Similarly Allah has promised that Paradise will be a reward for slaying in His cause (Qur'an 9: 111). The 'slaying in Allah's cause' is nothing but restoring order in the world and removing corruption (*fasaad*).

Like the other evils, spreading '*fasaad*' on earth appears to be in the very nature of man. Allah knows better about this instinct. When Allah was about to create man, the angels (*malaik*) had asked in wonder: "Are You going to create man who will spread '*fasaad*' on earth?" Allah had replied that He knew what they (the angels) knew not (Qur'an 2: 30).

One who spreads corruption (*fasaad*) is called a '*mufsid*' in the Qur'an. It is evident from the study of the world history that although 'the spreaders of corruption' (*mufsideen*) for the time being wielded worldly power, pomp and glory, their end, without exception, was very bleak and gloomy. They gained much in their lives but in the end they were the losers. The Qur'an again and again invites our attention to this uniform fate of the '*mufsiDeen*' and enjoins us to ponder over their end.

"And behold what happened in the end to the spreaders of corruption". (Qur'an 7:86, 8:103 and 27:14)

According to the Qur'an, '*jihad*' means striving in the way of Allah for extermination of '*fasaad*' from the earth, and establishment of peace, so that the religion of peace i.e., Islam, prescribed by Allah for mankind, is not disturbed. Hence terrorism which leads to worst kind of '*fasaad*' is something quite alien to Islam and against its very spirit. The Qur'an teaches a historical lesson, that whenever the fire of warfare was ignited by man, it was extinguished by Allah, so that cloisters and churches, synagogues and mosques may not be destroyed by the mischief of man. Allah as the author of peace, *As-salaam*, and as grantor of security *Al-mumin*, dislikes '*fasaad*' or disorder on the earth. A Muslim enters into a covenant with Allah to remove *fasaad* from the face of the earth by striving with his possessions and his life, to get Paradise, in return. The Qur'an calls this a goodly transaction. (Qur'an 9: 111).

3. *Iqra*

Iqra is the very first word of the Qur'an according to the chronological order. It is derived from the root '*qira*' (Latin *Ecrira*) which means to read loudly, to cry out, to recite, to call, to proclaim, to announce, to awaken. The English word 'cry' in a particular context has similar connotational affinity. '*Iqra*' is an imperative form of '*Qira*'. The meaning of the word '*iqra*' would be 'recite', 'proclaim' (the message of truth) and not merely read as it is translated. 'Speak' will be nearer to '*iqra*' than to read. The English imperative 'proclaim' although nearer than 'read' does not do full justice to the actual word used in the Qur'an: '*iqra*.'

The Arabic word '*qur'an*' means 'that which is to be read aloud'. It is derived from the same root meaning '*qira*.' The meaning of the word 'Qur'an' would be, 'a recital', 'a proclamation.' The verb from which the word Qur'an is derived does not mean to read in our sense but rather read aloud, to recite, to chant, precisely the act which is performed in the public recitation in the Mosque.

In the Old Testament we see: "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet and tell My people their transgression. And the house of Jacob their sins." (Isaiah 58:1)

"The voice said cry out, And he said what shall I cry?" (Isaiah 40:6)

The entire Qur'an is addressed to the Prophet, but at certain places the Prophet is given injunctions regarding the prophetic mission. These injunctions are in a way the authority with which he is invested.

When the Prophet passed the period of meditation and was invested with the mission of guidance, a stage came when he was to go forth boldly to deliver the message and to publicly proclaim it. Very appropriately the very first word of the first revelation pertains to the foremost duty of the Prophetic mission to proclaim the Truth that was revealed, to him.

"Recite in the name of your Lord Who created ..." (Qur'an 96:1)

The very next revelation also starts thus:

"O you wrapped one! arise and warn." (Qur'an 74:1)

Here, the word used in the Qur'an to address the Prophet is '*mudassir*' meaning cloaked with 'Prophetic Vestment.' Since Elijah, mantles have been a symbol of Prophetic and priestly authority.

The duty of a Prophet is to give glad tidings and to warn. The injunctions to warn is therefore, very apt.

At another place the injunction is:

“Speak out (vehemently) what you have been commanded.” (Qur’an 15:94)

The imperative word used in the Qur’an is ‘*fasada*’ for which there is no exact equivalent in English. T. B. Irving has translated it after Mohammad M. Pickthall as ‘proclaim’, while Abdullah Yusuf Ali has translated it as ‘expound openly.’ The meaning have been partly conveyed but the force of ‘*fasda*’ is not at all conveyed. It is therefore, necessary to explain it.

‘*Sada*’ means to make a crack in hard solids such as iron or glass. The fact that earth, (even rock) splits due to force of germination is mentioned in *inayah* 86:12.

The message of the Qur’an has to make its way into the hearts of unbelievers. Their hearts are compared to hard soil and the Prophet is enjoined to cause a burst into the hearts, hardened like rock or even harder (Qur’an 2:74). No other word would have been more forceful than ‘*sada*’, to convey the idea.

Here the bidding word is even more forceful than ‘to proclaim.’ Yet at another place, the injunction is :

“Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord.” (Qur’an 18:27)

To interpret ‘*iqra*’ as ‘read’ is not correct as it does not convey the entire meaning of the word. One can read the printed word without any movement of lips. Such reading is not ‘*qira*’. On the other hand, if one is reciting something without seeing a written matter, it can be termed as ‘*qira*’ whereas in English it is not reading. As there was no written matter before the Prophet at the time of the first ‘*wahi*’, the rendering of ‘*iqra*’ as ‘read’ cannot be considered as faithful.

4. *Amaanat, khiyaanat*

‘*Amaanat*’ is derived from the root, ‘*aman*’ meaning to be safe, to be at peace, to be free from fear. It is imperative (obligatory) for ‘*imaan*’ that the rights should be delivered to the person to whom they are due. Thus ‘*amaanat*’ is custody of not only material wealth but also of rights, such as justice, security etc.

The Prophet established himself in the community as ‘*ameen*’ i.e. trustworthy before conveying ‘*imaan*’ to the people. After accepting Islam, the first responsibility that devolves on a Muslim, is to be trust worthy. The Trust (*amaanat*) is mentioned in the Qur’an as a thing which man (without realizing its significance and his own limitations) has accepted his a responsibility. Because of this attitude man is regarded as unjust and foolish in the Qur’an.

(Qur'an 33:72).

Allah has made man the custodian of not only the entire physical Universe, but also of the Divine Law by which man is expected to function. It is therefore, the duty (obligation) of man that he should realize the significance and the importance of the Trust, which was offered to him and which he has accepted. He should do full justice to the Trust which is a sacred responsibility. Apart from this basic Trust, the Qur'an also refers to Trust on man to man level. The Qur'an enjoins to restore the trusts to their owners, and to judge between man and man with equity. (Qur'an 4:58).

This only implies that man should heed the laws of Allah and safeguard human rights at individual as well as collective levels.

The Qur'an declares that the believers are, "Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants (promises)." (Qur'an 23:8).

'Khiyaanat' is derived from the root *'khana'* meaning to deceive.

'Khiyaanat' is opposite of *'amaanat'*. To disregard this obligation of Allah and of the fellow human beings, and resort to injustice is *'khiyaanat'*. If someone having full confidence keeps his belongings with another person, if they are not returned to the owner, then it is *'khiyaanat'*. If a ruler or a person with authority, who is expected to do justice and maintain law and order, fails in his duty, it is *'khiyaanat'*.

The Qur'an enjoins:

"O you who believe! Do not betray trusts of Allah and of the Apostle, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you." (Qur'an 8:27).

'Khiyaanat' in effect is deceit or cheating. Says the Qur'an:

"Truly Allah does not like the treacherous (one who indulges in *'khiyaanat'*)." (Qur'an 8:58).

Similarly, according to the Qur'an,

"Allah guides not the plot of those who play false (who indulge in *'khiyaanat'*)." (Qur'an 12:52).

5. Ummatan Wasata

'Ummat' is derived from the root *'umma'* meaning, to seek, intend, propose. As a noun *'umma'* (plural *ummahat*) means mother.

'Ummat' (plural *'ummam'*) literally means a people, company, party (especially of the same religion) or a nation. The word occurs about fifty times

in the Qur'an. Qur'an says:

"For every people (*ummat*) there is an apostle; and when their apostle is come the matter is decided between them equitably and no one is wronged." (Qur'an 10:47)

'*Wasata*' is derived from the root '*wasata*' meaning to be in the midst, penetrate into the midst of. This word also implies a touch of the literal meaning of intermediacy.

Salati wusta in *ayah* 2:37 means "the best or most excellent prayer".¹ and²

'*Ummatan Wasata*' (used only once in the Qur'an) is generally interpreted as justly balanced people; that is people who are not inclined to either extreme.

'*Wasata*' is obviously not a subjective quality referring to Muslims as a community that keeps an equitable balance between extremes.

Muhammad's *Ummat* is a band of people - the comrades or companions of the Prophet and those who followed in their footsteps with a mind molded by the Qur'an. It is to this band the Qur'an addresses the appellation '*ummatan wasta*,' a community 'serving as a pattern unto other's even as the Prophet has been a pattern unto you' (Qur'an 2:143). It was this '*ummatan wasata*' which the Prophet of Islam organized into a state, an organization which was intended to serve as a nucleus of a world order. '*ummatan wasata*' can be considered as a beacon of guidance for all nations.

There is a constant struggle in human society between different classes, nations and people. Just the way an honest witness comes between two contending parties, advancing extravagant claims and settles their disputes by pruning their rival claims, a nation of just, honest and unselfish people is always required to keep a balance in the world. '*Ummatan wasata*' according to the Qur'an is such a nation.

In this *ayah* (2:143) Muslims are addressed as '*ummatan wasata*.' "This constitutes the proclamation appointing the religious community (*ummah*) consisting of the followers of Muhammad to religious guidance and leadership of the world."¹ This position of leadership is a heavy responsibility.

6. *Amr*

"Of all the Qur'anic terms, perhaps the most basic, comprehensive and revelatory, at once of divine nature of the universe, is the term '*amr*'".²

The word '*amr*' is derived from the root '*amara*' meaning to command,

order, or orderliness:

“And (so) whenever, they (unbelievers) commit a shameful deed, they say ‘we found our forefathers doing so’ and , ‘Allah had enjoined (*‘amaranaa*) it upon us’. Say: ‘Behold, never does Allah enjoin (*ya’muru*) shameful deeds. Would you attribute unto Allah something of which you have no knowledge?’” (Qur’an 7: 28)

“Say: ‘Is it, then, something other than Allah that you order (*ta’marrunni*) me to worship, O you who are unaware (of right and wrong)?’” (Qur’an 39: 64)

“And whenever We intended to destroy a city, We send an order(*‘amarnaa*) to the affluent among its people; but when they disregarded the warning, the sentence (of doom) passed on them takes effect and we let it come to absolute ruin”. (Qur’an 17: 16)

The implied meaning of *‘amr’* is judgment: “Allah’s judgment (*amrullaahi*) is (bound to) come: do not, therefore, call for its speedy advent!” (Qur’an 16: 1).

Similarly the implied meaning of *‘amr’* is also message of Allah which comes to His apostles:

“They ask you about revelation (*ruuh*), say revelation (*ruh*) is by of the command (*amr*) of my Lord and that you have been granted but little of knowledge (thereof).” (Qur’an 17: 85)

In this *ayah* *‘amr’* is used for command or behest and obviously it refers to inspiration which is exclusively by or of the command (*amr*) of Allah.

“To everything that is created is ipsofacto communicated its owner which is its own law of being but which is also a law whereby it is integrated into a system. This *‘amr’* i.e, order or command of God, is ceaseless. The term used to indicate the communication of owner to all things, including man, is *iswahy*, which we have translated in the previous section as ‘inspiration’. With reference to inorganic things it should be translated as ‘ingraining’. This is because with reference to man, who constitutes a special case, it is not just *amr* that is sent down from high, but a ‘spirit-from-*amr’*, (*ruh-min-al-amr*), as the Qur’an repeatedly tells us”.¹

As a noun *‘amrun’* (plural, *umuur*) means a command, decree, matter or affair. The word *‘amr’*, conveys the meaning of purpose, design, will or behest:

“And I did not do (any of) this of my own accord (*‘an’amrii*): This is the real meaning of (those events) that you were unable to bear with patience.” (Qur’an 18: 82)

“(I call to witness the angels who) carry out his behests (*‘amraa’*)”. (Qur’an 79:5)

7. *Amr bil maruuf* (Qur’an 3: 104, 3:110, 3:114, 7:157, 9:71, 9:112, 31:17 etc.)

This phrase is a combination of two words *‘amr’* and *‘maruuf’*. As seen above, the word *‘amr’* is comprehensive and includes:

- a) to order, to enjoin or to command (Qur’an 7:28)
- b) a purpose, design, will or behest (Qur’an 18:82 & 19:5)

The word *‘maruuf’* is derived from the root *‘arafa’* meaning to know or to recognize. *‘Maruuf’* means whatever is recognized (as just and right), whatever is prevalent, whatever is in usage or in common practice (of decency).

The equivalents provided for *‘maruuf’* in (Qur’an 3:110) by some of the English translators of the Qur’an are as follows:

Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Dr, Syed Abdul Latif have rendered *‘maruuf’* as right. Marmaduke Pickthall, has rendered as, right conduct, N.J. Dawood, has rendered as justice, Mirza Abul Fazl, has rendered as just, Ahmed Ali has rendered as good A.J. Arberry has rendered it as honour, T.B. Irving has rendered as decency.

These renderings are acceptable only to the extent they do not convey the opposite sense. They do not, however, represent the subtleness which we find in the original.

Right kindness, decency etc are as all relative concepts what is right for one society, need not be right or decent for the other. The Qur’an enjoins us to do that which is commonly recognised (as right).

Amar bil maruuf is imperative, meaning ‘order or enjoin whatever is recognised (as just and right)’.

One fundamental policy (*modus vivendi*) of Islam, as a religion of nature, has been that the teachings of Islam are not imposed or implanted on the society. Practices, morality etc., were enjoined by apostles on their respective *Ummah* as a part of one and the only *Deen*. Such of the practices which from time to time creep in and which are not in conformity with the original *Deen* (Islam) are eliminated.

This grand idea of not only accepting all that is universally recognised as decent, right or good but also to take the collective responsibility of enforcing these commonly accepted norms is reflected in *‘amr bil maruuf’*. Every Muslim

is duty bound not only to enjoin his fellow-believers, but also others to act as per the universally accepted norms. The justification for taking up this role is the acceptance and enforcement of such practices which are universally recognised as decent and good.

8. *Ummi*

Umm in Arabic means mother. The source or the base is also called *Umm*. The person who remains in the same position as he was at his birth is called *Ummi*. In the Qur'an among others the Prophet is called '*Ummi*'. The general concept is that the Prophet was illiterate. The conclusion thus drawn is perhaps not quite correct.

Umm is also the head of some thing; for example, Makkah was called '*Ummal Qura*,' the mother of all villages, because it was a great trading center. According to some Scholars, therefore, the word '*Ummi*' is derived from *Ummal Qura*, i.e., metropolis. The general impression about the inhabitants of the metropolitan city Makkah was that they were unlettered people. Thus *Ummi* was used for unlettered.

The fact was that the Arabs who were unfamiliar with '*Al-Kitab*,' 'The Book' were usually unlettered also. The word '*Ummi*' means one who is not conversant with the contents of earlier Semitic scriptures and refers to a person who is not a follower of either Judaism or Christianity. '*Ummiyun*' are those who have not had a book, particularly the people of Makkah before Islam. The word *Ummiyun* is also used in the Qur'an for such of those who are unfamiliar with '*Al-Kitab*,' (The Book).

"And (there are) generally among them who do not have any knowledge of the Book, except that which is recited to them" (Qur'an 2:78).

The Jews had given them the name '*Ummiyun*'. In those days literacy generally revolved round 'The Book.' The majority of the people of Makkah were unlettered at the time of the advent of Islam. *Ummiyun*, therefore, more generally means the unlettered ones. The name given to the Arabs by the Jews also implied a sense of superiority, as it is evident from the following *ayah* of the Qur'an:

"That is because they (Jews) say: 'there is no obligation upon us in respect of the *Ummiyun* (the gentiles).'" (Qur'an 3:75)

The Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have generally agreed that the Prophet of Islam was unlettered. The Muslim scholars used this concept to show the miracle of the Qur'an. These scholars base their arguments on the following *ayah* of the Qur'an:

"And you could not read any book before it, nor could you write with your right hand, then (otherwise) surely those who are given to vanity might

have doubted" (Qur'an 29:48).

And conclude that the Prophet was unlettered. In fact what is mentioned in the above *ayah* is:

(O Prophet!) before (the revelation of) the Qur'an you could not read (*Taurat or Injeel*) nor could you write the text.

Even according to this interpretation, the miracle of the Qur'an can be maintained, but to conclude on the authority of this *ayah* that the Prophet of Islam was un-lettered is perhaps not correct.

Dr. Syed Abdul Latif in his paper, 'Was the Prophet 20 of Islam un-lettered?',¹ has expressed his views that the Prophet was not unlettered.

To establish the fact that the Prophet was not a fabricator, or maker of books, it is not necessary to prove that he was unlettered. In fact he was un-read (of the earlier books), and un-taught in the usual sense of the word. The fact that the Prophet had no occasion to meet men of learning, and yet he could take such a deep and comprehensive view of the life of man and its vital needs, and could go into such details regarding the essentials of good life, is sufficient to establish the fact that the Qur'an is a divine inspiration.

Many scholars including Baidhavi have interpreted *Ummiyun* as people other than the people of the Book (The Gentiles).

The eminent Qur'anic Scholar Tamanna Imadi (1887-1973) also subscribes to the view that the word *Ummi* does not mean unlettered. According to him the word *ummiyun* is used in the Qur'an for bani Ismaeel as against bani Israel.²

The following *ayaat* of the Qur'an make the above interpretation very clear:

And say to those who have been given the Book and to the Gentiles (*Ummiyun*): Do you accept Islam? (Qur'an 3:20)

"And among the followers of earlier revelation (*Ahlil Kitab*) there is many a one who, if you entrust him with treasure, will (faithfully) restore it to you; and there is among them (*Ahlil Kitab*) many a one who, if you trust him with a tiny gold coin (dinar) will not restore it to you unless you keep standing over him which is an outcome of their assertion. 'No blame can attach to us (for anything that we may do) with regard to these Gentiles (*Ummiyun*): and (so) they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware (that it is a lie)". (Qur'an 3:175).

"He it is who has raised up amidst the Gentiles (*Ummiyun*) an Apostle

from among themselves” (Qur’an 62:2).

“So believe in Allah and his Apostle, the Gentile (*Ummi*) Prophet who believes in Allah and His Words (injunctions).” (Qur’an 7:158)

In all the above *ayaat Ummiyun*, *Ummi* clearly refers to Gentiles (i.e., non-Jewish and non-Christian).

In the following *ayah* of the Qur’an:

“So that you may warn (the people of) metropolis and those around it’ (Qur’an 42:7).

The people who live in the metropolis and around it refers to the Gentiles only. Again in the following *ayah* of the Qur’an:

“Those who follow the Apostle---the Gentile Prophet---whom they find mentioned in the Taurat and Injeel” (Qur’an 7:157).

‘*Nabiul Ummi*’ clearly refers to Prophet Muhammad (S), a Gentile Prophet, according to the Jews and the Christians.

The word ‘*Ummi*’ is used as a by-name for ‘bani Ismaeel’ as against ‘bani Israel’ who were the people of the book. There are allusions to this fact in the following *ayaat*:

“..... Nay, but it is the truth from thy Sustainer enabling thee warn (these) people to whom no warner has come before thee---” (Qur’an 32:3)

“But We have given them (the first addressees of the Qur’an, mostly ‘*bani Ismaeel*’) no book which they may study, nor have We sent to them any warner before thee.” (Qur’an 34:44).

Thus *Ummi* refers to Gentile (who did not possess Divine revelations).

In the following *ayah* the word ‘*ummiyun*’ is not used yet the reference is made to the believers as against the ‘people of the book’.

“It shall not be in accordance with your wishful thinking nor in accordance with the wishful thinking of the people of the Book: whoever does evil he shall be requited with it, and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor a ‘helper’”. (Qur’an 4:123)

It may be noted that Islam recognizes knowledge as a need for mankind. It states that seeking of knowledge is obligatory not only for the ignorant, but also for those who are in its possession and quest. Islam admits the importance of knowledge for the growth of consciousness. The universalization of knowledge, as prescribed by Islam, opens the door of ongoing education system and research.

The erroneous interpretation of this word has given rise to the ridiculous notion which prevails among most of the non-Muslims and even some Muslims that ignorance is a principle of religion in Islam.

The doctrine, formulated in the later development of Islam, that the Prophet of Islam could neither read nor write is hardly tenable. How could the scion of the aristocratic religious house, who took charge of trading caravans to Syria, lack so essential an accomplishment?

That he employed amanuenses is no argument that he was unlettered.

The sense of illiterate or unlettered for Ummi developed almost two centuries later.

9. *Barzakh* (Qur'an 23:100)

Literally, '*barzakh*' is a bar that intervenes between any two things; an obstacle or a hindrance. It is a dividing line that separates two objects. In the following *ayah* of the Qur'an it is used to mean 'barrier':

"And He it is who has given freedom of movement to two great bodies of water - -- the one sweet and thirst allaying, and the other salty and bitter--- and yet wrought between them a barrier (*barzakh*) and a forbidding ban." (Qur'an 25:53)

In another place the word '*hajiz*' is used instead of '*barzakh*':

"Nay --- who is it that has made the earth a fitting abode (for living things), and has caused running waters (to flow) in its midst, and has set upon it mountains firm, and has placed a barrier (*hajiz*) between the two bodies of water." (Qur'an 27:61)

The same literal meaning of '*barzakh*' is still used in this *ayah*:

"(Yet) between them is a barrier which they may not transgress". (Qur'an 55:20)

Barzakh has been used only once in the Qur'an as a term, signifying a state in which people will be after death and before judgement. In other words, *barzakh* is an intervening state between death and the 'Day of Judgment'. In the following *ayah*, '*barzakh*' has been used as a term:

". . . Nay, it is indeed but a (meaningless) word that he (unbeliever) utters; for behind those (who leave the world) there is a barrier, *barzakh* (of death) until the Day when all will be raised from the dead." (Qur'an 25:100)

In the above *ayah* '*barzakh*' denotes a state, stage, or interval between an individual's death and the resurrection. In other words, it is a barrier between

the death of a person till the Day of Judgement. According to the Qur'an, during all this period, after death, men will be kept away from Allah's presence as if by a partition, and when all human beings will be raised, they will be presented before Allah:

"It would be but a single blast of the trumpet and they would all be arraigned before Us" (Qur'an 36:53).

According to the Qur'an, '*barzakh*' is not a locality as generally believed. It is an interregnum between the present life and the hereafter.¹

This intervening state is also known by the name '*qabr*', which means 'grave' but has also been used in a wider sense of the state which follows death. Thus the three states; death, the grave and resurrection, are spoken of, where the grave undoubtedly stands for '*barzakh*':

"Then He causes him to die, then assigns him grave (*aqbara-hu*); then when He pleases, He will raise him to life again" (Qur'an 80:21-22).

And the raising to life on the Day of Resurrection is spoken of as the raising to life of those who are in their graves, as in *ayaat* 100:9 and 22:7, where all people are meant, whether actually buried or not. The state of '*qabar*' is therefore the same state as that of '*barzakh*', a state in which every man is placed after death, and before the Resurrection.

The '*Sahih*' of Bukhari regards the punishment of '*barzakh*' and of '*qabr*' as one, and thus he establishes the identity of '*qabr*' and '*barzakh*'.

The concept of the raising of the dead, and that all human beings will be gathered and brought before Allah is clearly presented in the Qur'an in several *ayaat* e.g. *ayaat* 2:46, 5:96, 11:23 etc.

As compared to the dead in general, those of the believers who have lost their lives in the cause of Allah will not have to live in '*barzakh*'; they will be given a new life and they will be in the presence of Allah, where Allah will provide sustenance to them:

"But do not think of those that have been 'slain in the cause of Allah' as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Sustainer have they their sustenance" (Qur'an 3:169).

Apart from those who are 'slain in the cause of Allah' all others, who will be kept in '*barzakh*', will have no life. The common belief that saints etc. even after physical death, have a life, is not supported by the Qur'an. Says the Qur'an:

"Now those beings that some people (in their ignorance) invoke beside

Allah, cannot create any thing, since they themselves are but created: They are dead, not living, and they do not even know when they will be raised from the dead" (Qur'an 16:20-21).

The Qur'an not only says that except the persons 'slain in the cause of Allah' all others will be kept as dead in *barzakh*, but also says that they will have no faculty of consciousness, hearing etc.

"And who could be more astray than one who invokes, instead of Allah, such as will not respond to him till the Day of Judgement, and are not even conscious of being invoked" (Qur'an 46:5).

"If you invoke them, they would not (be able to) respond to you ----" (Qur'an 35:14).

Now if we examine the life of '*barzakh*' from a different angle, it will be seen that man is endowed with life twice:

". . . He gave you life when you were without life. He will (then) make you die, then bring you back to life. To Him then you will return" (Qur'an 2:23).

It goes without saying that men will be given second life only on the Day of Judgement, and that during '*barzakh*' they will have no life. On the Day of Resurrection, all men will be raised and assembled as if from sleep: "they will say: Oh, woe unto us! Who has roused us from our sleep (of death)?" (Qur'an 36:52)

The dead of all ages will have no awareness of the time that they have passed in '*barzakh*'. It is perhaps not correct to construe that there will be torment and suffering of punishment in '*barzakh*'. Nowhere in the Qur'an is there any mention of suffering or punishment during '*barzakh*'. Such a notion will imply that those who died earlier will suffer for a longer period of time than those who died later. The condition in '*barzakh*' as emerges from the Qur'an is one of undisturbed rest.

Some commentators, on the wrong interpretation of *ayah* 40:46, surmise that Firaun and his people are suffering punishment morning and evening. This interpretation as discussed separately is incorrect. The *ayah* 40:46 only means that the people of the Firaun were warned about the fire day in and out during their life time, but did not heed the warnings. Consequently, they shall be condemned to the most severe suffering on the Day of Judgement.

In Greek mythology 'Hades' is the name of the god of the dead and the kingdom of Hades is the abode of the dead or departed spirits. Some commentators unfortunately have used the term '*barzakh*' in the sense of

Hades.

10. *Bayyinaat, zuhr* (Qur'an 3: 184)

Bayyin (plural *bayyinaat*) is derived from the root '*bayana*' meaning to be distinct and separate. '*Bayyin*' means plain and clear. When applied to the messages of Allah it means commonly understood revelation. The messages which came from Allah through the Prophets for the guidance of man are referred to '*bayyinaat*' or '*ayaat bayyinaat*' meaning plain revelations or clear arguments:

"Certainly We have bestowed clear messages (*ayaatin-bayyinaat*) upon you from on high; and none denies their truth except the iniquitous." (Qur'an 2: 99)

Similarly, a thing which is clear and open, is called '*mubeen*.' The Qur'an is also called '*mubeen*' i.e., its contents are plain and clear:

"O followers of the Bible! now there has come to you Our Apostle, to make clear unto you much of what you have been concealing (from yourselves) of the Book (The Bible), and concealing much (thereof). Now there has come unto you from Allah a light, and a clear Book (*Kitabum-Mubiin*)" (Qur'an 5: 15).

It is also mentioned that the Qur'an is sent in simple and easily understood (*mubiin*) Arabic:

"And, indeed, full well do We know that they say, 'Only a human being teaches (all) this to him (the Prophet)', (not withstanding that) the tongue of him to whom they so maliciously point is wholly outlandish, whereas this (the Qur'an) is (in) clear Arabic language. (*Lisaanun - Arabiyyunn-mubiin*)" (Qur'an 16: 103)

'*Zubr*' (singular *zabur*) means Book. It is commonly believed that the Book which was revealed to Prophet Dawud is mentioned by name as '*Zabur*'.

The Qur'an says:

"Verily We have inspired in you as We inspired in (Prophet Nuuh) and in the Prophets after him and also as We inspired in Ibrahim and Ismail and Is-haq and Yaqub and their progeny and in I'sa and Ayyub and Yunus and Harun and Sulayman and We gave the Book (*Zabur*) to Dawud". (Qur'an 4: 163)

In this *ayah* the fact is mentioned that the Qur'an was inspired to

Prophet Muhammed just in the same way as Books were inspired to all earlier Prophets. Here 'zubur' is used as common noun and it is mentioned as a book (and not as the name of a particular book). In fact wherever the word 'zubur' is used in the Qur'an, it clearly means book or scriptures as a common noun. Moreover, 'zubur' is not exclusively used as the book of Prophet Dawud but it applies to all the Prophets mentioned in the *ayah*. The name of Dawud being at the end it is considered that 'zubur' was granted to Dawud.

The very fact that the word 'zabr' is used in the Qur'an as plural of 'zubur' shows that 'zubur' is not used as the name of a particular book:

"(O Prophet!) if they discredit you (do not lose heart, for) apostles before you have been equally discredited, although they came with all evidence of the truth (*bayyinaat*) and books (*zabr*) and with light-giving revelation." (Qur'an 3: 104 and 35: 25)

From the above *ayah* it is clear that the word 'zubur' is not used in the Qur'an as a proper noun. The names mentioned as of particular books are only 'Qur'an' and 'Injiil'. There is no question of using plural of these proper nouns.

"Zabur (lit., 'scripture' or 'book') is a generic term denoting any 'book of wisdom': Hence, any and all of the divine scriptures revealed by God to the Prophets (Tabari)".¹

The ancient and earlier books and Scriptures are referred to in the Qur'an as '*zabr-il-awwaliin*':

"And verily (the essence of) this (revelation) is indeed found in ancient (*zabr-il-awwaliin*)". (Qur'an 26 : 196)

In, the following *ayaat* both the words '*bayyinaat*' and '*zabr*' are used together, indicating two different kinds of Messages, which were revealed to the apostles of Allah: (Qur'an 3:184, 16:44 & 35:25)

Bayyinaat as against '*zabr*' applies to revelations which were explained exclusively. This term is therefore, applicable to oral revelations, passing from mouth to mouth for generations which was the case with the most of the early Messages. They pertain to the age when writing was not resorted to. '*Zabur*' on the other hand, are books and scriptures. The Qur'an in the beginning itself declares that it is a "Book" i.e., it is to be preserved as a Book. This declaration clearly indicates that it is not meant to be communicated exclusively from mouth to mouth.

11. Hadith (Qur'an 39:23, 31:6, 12:6, 23:44, etc.)

The word *hadith* in the Qur'an connotes a different meaning than the

meaning it acquired in post-Qur'anic literature.

Hadith literally means, episode, history, communication, narration, occurrence or incident. When used as adjective it means new or recent event.

The word '*hadith*' with all the derivatives has been used in the Qur'an 36 times. In the Qur'an the word has been used for:

1. Religious communication or message (ie. the Qur'an)

"Allah has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful message (*ahsan al-hadith*) in the form of a Book which is (*mutashabih*) similar (to earlier revelations and is in conformity with them), and it is oft repeated (*mathani*)" (Qur'an 39:23)

"Then leave Me alone (to deal) with such as reject this message (*hadith*)" (Qur'an 68:44).

2. Conversation

"When you see men engaged in vain discourse about Our message (*ayah*) turn away from them until they begin some other conversation (*hadith*) " (Qur'an 6:68).

"When the Prophet confided a conversation (*hadith*) to one of his wives" (Qur'an 66:3).

3. Narration

"Has the story (*hadith*) of Musa reached you ?" (Qur'an 20:9)

In the Qur'an the word is used to denote the above literal meaning, and is used in several different phrases such as:

Ahsan al-Hadith (Qur'an 39:23), *Lahwal-Hadith* (31:6), *Taweel ul-Ahadith* (Qur'an 12:6). It is also used in the idiom '*wajaalanahum ahadith*', (Qur'an 23:44).

In the post-Qur'anic literature however '*hadith*' (plural *ahadith*) was used as a term and applies to the tradition, i.e., a record of what the Prophet of Islam said and did, or approved.

It was used for what was transmitted on the authority of the Prophet, his deeds, sayings, tacit approval, or description of his features (features of the Prophet are not included in the definition used by the jurists).

As "*hadith* literature stands for the narration concerning the Prophet.....in reporting, narrating and recording the life and conduct of the Prophet some mistakes were committed even by the most sincere scholars, not to speak of

some unscrupulous men who deliberately fabricated materials pretending to be concerned with the Prophet. Therefore, the 'science of hadith' was developed, to evaluate every single statement ascribed to the Prophet."¹

The word '*sunnah*' is frequently used with the post Qur'anic term '*hadith*'.

Sunnah (plural *sunnah*) means manner of acting, conduct or mode of life. In the following *ayaat* the word '*sunnah*' is used to mean 'model or uniform behaviour of Allah:

".....Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with? But no change will you find in Allah's way (of dealing): No deviation will you find in Allah's way (of dealing)." (Qur'an 35:43)

"(Such has been) the practice of Allah already in the past; no change will you find in the practice (way of dealing) of Allah." (Qur'an 48:23)

In the Qur'an the word '*sunnah*' and its plural '*sunan*' have been used sixteen times². In all of these cases it is used in the sense of established course of rule, mode of life, and line of conduct. Nowhere in the Qur'an the word '*sunnah*' is used to denote the model behaviour of the Prophet.

The 'term' *hadith* is used to denote a pattern of conduct of the Prophet to be followed. In the Qur'an there is specific injunction to this effect:

"You have indeed in the Apostle of Allah, '*uswatun hasanah*' ie. a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day and who engages much in the praise of Allah." (Qur'an 33:21)

The word used here is '*uswatun hasanah*'.

The Qur'an, speaks of obedience to the Messenger of Allah, which is obligatory and mentions his example which ought to be followed. Thus '*ahadith*' of the Prophet are repositories for the '*sunnah*' of the Prophet.

As '*hadith*' acquired the meaning of the narration of the life of the prophet so also '*sunnah*' acquired the meaning of the model behavior of the Prophet. In the post Qur'anic literature the word '*hadith*' and '*sunnah*' were used almost interchangeably though there is a slight difference between their Qur'anic usage.

12. *Daabbah* (Qur'an 27:82)

The word '*Daabbah*' literally means a living creature. This word has been used 14 times in the Qur'an.¹ The word has a wider connotation. Except in *inayah* 34:14 where this word has been used for a particular creature i.e. white

ant, in all other places it is used for living creatures.

While interpreting *ayah* 27:82, commentators have stated that as one of the signs of Doomsday, a beast or monster will emerge from the earth which will have the faculty of speech. It will talk to the people who do not believe in the signs of Allah. This by itself will be the final argument, sufficient to convince the unbelievers. With the presumption that '*Daabbah*' refers to the beast who speaks, some exegetes consider that the reference to the monster is of a symbolic character and represents gross materialism. In fact it is not necessary either to attribute a super natural element or to give symbolic meaning to a simple fact.

1. Causing all manner of living creatures (*Daabbah*) to multiply on earth is shown as one of the signs of Allah in *ayah* 2:164. *Ayah* 31:10 says that it is Allah who has caused all manner of living creatures, (*Daabbah*) to multiply on earth. The creation of all living creatures (*Daabbah*) which Allah has caused to multiply is shown as one of the signs of Allah in *ayah* 42:29. *Ayah* 45:4 says that in the creation of all the animals (*Daabbah*) which Allah has scattered over the earth there are signs for people who are endowed with inner certainty. In all the above four *ayaat* the word '*Daabbah*' is used to denote all the living creatures.

2. In *ayah* 11:6 it is pointed out that there is no creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah.

3. In *ayah* 11:56, the Qur'an says:

"There is no moving creature, but Allah holds it by its fore-lock."

4. In *ayah* 16:49 the Qur'an says:

"To Allah prostrates whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on earth of the living creatures, and also the angels."

5. In *ayah* 16:61 and 35:45 the Qur'an says,

"If Allah were to punish men for their wrong doings, He will not leave on it (earth) a single living creature."

6. In *ayah* 24:45 the Qur'an says:

"Allah has created every (*daabbah*) creature from water, of them there are some that creep on their bellies, some walk on two legs and some that walk on four."

From a close study of all the above *ayaat* it becomes abundantly clear

that human beings are also covered by the word '*Daabbah*'.

Even in *ayaat* where human beings are not covered by the word '*Daabbah*' the similarities of the mode of living of animals and human beings are stressed. It is stated in the Qur'an that like human beings all animals form communities:

"There is not an animal (*Daabbah*) that lives on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but forms communities like you (human beings)." (Qur'an 6:38)

Men are also creatures. The only difference is that they have a higher status than other living creatures. When the Qur'an mentions that Allah scattered '*Daabbah*' throughout the world, it equally applies to men. (Qur'an 2:164, 31:10, 42:29 and 45:4) Human beings have been compared to cattle:

" They are just like cattle; and have strayed far away (from the right track)." (Qur'an 24:44)

Similarly human beings are compared to asses:

"As though they (people who refuse to listen to the truth) were terrified asses fleeing from a lion". (Qur'an 74:50 & 51)

When the Qur'an points out that Allah provides sustenance for all '*Daabbah*', it equally applies to men (Qur'an 11:6), when the Qur'an says that Allah holds all creatures by their fore-lock (Qur'an 11:56), it also applies to men with greater force. In *ayaat* 96:15 & 16, holding by fore-lock exclusively applies to men. The Qur'an says that all living creature and angels prostrate to Allah. Here men are to be necessarily covered by the word '*Daabbah*'. Otherwise it would be construed that men do not prostrate to Allah.

According to the Qur'an whatever is in the heaven and on earth prostrate to Allah (Qur'an 16:49).

As such prostrating before Him is a rule, and not prostrating is an exception. By the fact that discretion is granted to man his innate quality will not change.

According to the Qur'an Allah will annihilate all living creatures as a punishment of man's sins (Qur'an 16:61 & 35:45) - It is but obvious that man is included in the definition of '*Daabbah*'. It is against the justice of Allah to punish all other creatures and to exempt the real culprit. The fact that all the creatures including man should be annihilated for the sins committed by man can be understood as man has been endowed with a higher status than the animal kingdom. He will be answerable to Allah for the annihilation of other creatures.

This clearly shows what the expression '*Daabbah*' signifies. Inclusion of

man under the definition of '*Daabbah*' is very pointed when the Qur'an mentions '*Daabbah*' that walk on two legs (Qur'an 24:45) and '*Daabbah*' who will talk (Qur'an 27:82)

The Qur'an says for persons who go astray that the Prophet's responsibility was to convey the truth. He was not responsible for the obstinacy of men who rejected it. According to the Qur'an a time will come when the Decree will be passed against such people, and the true values of right and wrong will be restored. The dumb creatures of the world will speak out at this juncture. The Qur'an says in the *ayah* in question.

"When the sentence will have been passed against them, We shall bring forth '*Daabbah*' from the earth who will speak to them that men did not believe in His signs." (Qur'an 27:82)

13. *Da'a* and *jaba*

The words '*da'a*' and '*jaba*' can loosely be rendered into English as 'question and answer'. The word '*da'a*', meaning question, assumed the meaning of 'asking' or 'requesting' for certain favours, just as the word 'question' in English assumed the meaning of 'inquiring' or 'interrogating' with doubt and uncertainty.

Da'a in Qur'anic vocabulary means to call, to invoke, to make a request or to pray.

If one calls for a servant or a doctor such call does not constitute *du'a*. '*Da'a*' is summon or a call to a being who is considered as '*ilah*' and about whom it is believed that he possesses powers. The basis on which a prayer, '*du'a*' is addressed to some one includes necessarily a concept of his being possessed of authority and power to provide the necessary means, which are not available to the person who prays.

Standard words of prayer have been prescribed in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic prayers in fact, mould the human mind as to what one should aspire and desire for.

By the very act of praying, it is implied that the person who prays has full belief in Allah and that he is obedient to Allah. That is why Allah is pleased with the person who prays. It is only in this context that prayer can be regarded as worship. Even then, it is to be noted that it is not a prescribed

worship which is obligatory and for which Muslims are duty bound. Praying to the Lord and asking for his favours is not obligatory. *Da'a* is to be distinguished from '*salaat*', which is obligatory and a formal act of worship. In the Qur'anic vocabulary *da'a* is quite different from '*salaat*' or '*ibada*'.

The word '*ibada*' is used in the Qur'an to indicate worship as in:

"You alone we worship, (*na'budu*) and to you alone we turn for help". (Qur'an 1: 4)

The word '*da'a*' has been misinterpreted by rendering it as worship. The Qur'an says about the unbelievers:

"In His place they invoke (*yaduuna*) only females (the pagan deities) and instead of Him they invoke (*yaduuna*) *Satan*, the obstinate rebel." (Qur'an 4: 117)

If '*yadun*' is translated as 'they worship', it would imply that to worship others than Allah is not covered by any injunction. This premise is obviously against the basic teachings of the Qur'an. The Qur'an in not less than 47 places, prohibited calling or invoking others than Allah.

Nowhere in the Qur'an is the root *da'a* with all its derivatives) used to indicate worship.

"And who is better in speech than he who invites (people) to Allah and does what is right and says 'verily' I am one of the Muslims". (Qur'an 41: 33)

In the above *ayah* the word '*da'a*' cannot be rendered as worship. Wherever the word '*da'a*' is used in the Qur'an, it indicates 'to call' 'to invoke'. Nowhere is it used to denote 'worship'.

Seeking refuge in Allah from the evil influences or evil-doers is also a kind of prayer (*du'a*) (*Surahs* 113 and 114) although the word *da'a* is not specifically used.

Admission of sin and one's own short-comings cannot be considered as prayer. The Muslims in the sub-Continent have given the name '*Ayat-e-Karima*' to the Qur'anic *ayah* (Qur'an 21: 87) and interpret it as a prayer. In fact this *ayah* expresses the admission of short-coming of the Prophet Yunus. Although admission of sin is definitely appreciable, it cannot by itself be regarded as prayer.

When the prayer (*du'a*) or request is from man to Allah, it is but implied that Allah will not respond to each and every request: Man is the only disorderly element in nature. Man's desires are unlimited, mostly unreasonable, and are in conflict with the interests of each other. It only follows that Allah will hearken and take into consideration all the requests,

but will act according to His own design. If, on the other hand, the request of man is in conformity with the universal plan, Allah will respond to such a call. This position is made very clear in the Qur'an.

In the following *ayah* different derivatives of the root *da'a* have been used thrice:

"But I (Prophet Ibrahim) shall withdraw from you all and from whatever you invoke (*taduuna*) instead of Allah, and shall invoke (-'ad-uu) my Sustainer (alone): it may well be that my prayer (*dua*) will not remain un-answered by my sustainer". (Qur'an 19:48)

Jaba means to hearken, to listen, to give attention to or to lend an ear. With reference to *da'a*, there is a promise from Allah that He is close to His servants and when we call Him for help, He will hearken. No assurance is, however, given that He will accept our request. The following *ayah* is very clear in this regard:

"And your Lord said 'call upon Me! I will hearken unto you. But they who refrain from serving Me, shall enter Hell humiliated.'" (Qur'an 40: 60)

By no stretch of imagination, can it be construed that Allah will accept each and every request of men. What is guaranteed is that Allah will surely hearken to the request.

In other contexts, however, where no '*da'a*' from man to Allah is involved, '*jaba*' means to answer the call.

"The wrong-doers will say on the Day of Judgment 'Oh Lord! respite us for a short time: We will respond to your call and will follow the Prophets.'" (Qur'an 14: 44)

Similarly where '*jaba*' is not used with '*da'a*', it indicates active response.

"Of those who answer the call of Allah and of the Prophet, even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward." (Qur'an 3: 172).

In this *ayah* the word '*da'a*' is not used and here (*astajaabuu*) means 'answered'.

Similarly the word '*jaba*' is used to indicate that the people of Prophet Lut did not heed to his entreaties (Qur'an 7: 82). In this *ayah* the word '*da'a*' is not used. *Jaba* is also used along with the word '*nida*' which also means 'to call' or to make a request, for example:

"(Prophet) *Nuuh* had called on Us and how excellent was Our response

to (him)". (Qur'an 37: 75)

There is a general practice among the Muslims of raising up the hands for supplication after finishing *Salaat*. Nowhere in the Qur'an there is any injunction or even a hint in support of this practice. Similarly there is no reference in any *hadith* that the Prophet raised up his hands for supplication after finishing *Salaat*.

14. *Dahr* (Qur'an 45:24, 76:1)

'*Dahr*' means time or period of time. In fact '*dahr*' applies to the entire period covering from the beginning of the universe till its end. On the other hand the word '*asr*' is used for a period of time (both long and short).

Since time brings to pass events, good and evil '*dahr*' was applied by the Arabs to fortune or fate and they used to blame '*dahr*':

"And yet they (men who have gone astray) say: there is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die as we come to life, and nothing but time (*dahr*) destroys us, but of this they have no knowledge whatever. They do nothing but guess." (Qur'an 45:24)

Dahr also applies to a long period:

"Surely there came over man a period of time (*dahr*) when he was not a thing that could be spoken of (mentioned) " (Qur'an 76:1)

15. *Ruh* and *Nafs*

The Arabic words *Ruh* and *Nafs* are generally translated as spirit or soul. Soul is considered as the essential substance of a person and it is regarded as immaterial and immortal. It is conceived as something forming an identity distinct from the body. It is also considered as the essence of life both individually and in general. Some conception corresponding to the word soul has been found in all ages among all religions.

It is generally believed from the ages that at death the soul sheds the body and goes to Gods. 'the universal soul'. It is a fixed belief that the body is corruptible and its constituent matter is impermanent but that the soul is immortal and imperishable. During life the soul is imprisoned in a mortal body at death body is supposed to disintegrate into elements of which it was composed. After death, however, freed from the weight that drags it down to earth, the liberated soul returns to its own abode. God is thought of as the fount of all souls.

In his thought provoking article Mr.K.A.Hamid states that the Qur'an does not endorse the radical doctrine of mind-body dualism found in earlier

man-made religions and philosophies.²

Although the body versus soul concept is very old, it appears that originally in the divine scriptures there was no distinction between the soul and the body. The concept was introduced through the later interpolations and it reappeared again and again in every religion.

Buddhism, in its earlier stage, did not use the word soul. What in every religion is called soul; in Hinduism it is atman, in Buddhism it is termed as mind. In later Buddhist literature, however, concept of soul versus body was introduced. The theory of reincarnation or transmigration of soul is based mainly on the belief of separability of soul from the body. After death when body disintegrates it is believed that the soul enters another body.

The belief in the immortal soul, liberated by death from the duration of the mortal body, does not accord with the traditional Jewish doctrine. Originally there was no notion in Judaism of a separate existence of the soul after death. Introduction of Hellenism into the ancient Near East, Israelite thought began to espouse the notion of a separation of soul and body. As a result of the development of later religious conceptions the body versus soul concept was introduced.

The Hebrew word for spirit is also 'Ruh'. A careful study of all the passage wherein the word Ruh is used in the Jewish Scriptures shows that it is used for the breath of life or the source of prophecy which comes from God.

Islam conceived human organism as one entity. Man was created as an organism with a certain body-mind content. Body divorced from soul is against the very spirit of the Qur'an. Nowhere does the Qur'an deny bodily luxuries to the inmates of paradise. The whole man has to live his life on earth; hence the whole man should enjoy and suffer the consequences. Resurrection (Hashr) is for man, not for a body-less soul or a soul-less body. Soul and body are abstractions from the concrete reality that is Man. In the Qur'an there is no doctrine of the immortality of the soul – the message is that of the continuity or immortality of man.

It is interesting to note that Dr Fazlur Rahman (d.1988) in his book Major Themes of the Qur'an has also subscribed to the same views, Says he "The Qur'an does not appear to endorse the kind of doctrine of a radical mind-body dualism found in Greek philosophy. Christianity or Hinduism; indeed, there is hardly a passage in the Qur'an that says that man is composed of two separate, let alone disparate, substances, the body and the soul (even though later orthodox Islam particularly after al-Ghazali and largely through his influence, came to accept it). The term nafs, frequently employed by the Qur'an and often translated as soul simply means person or self".

The eminent scholar Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi (d.1944) in his Urdu

book 'Shah Waliullah and His Thought' observes: If Shah Waliullah's term *Nafs Kuliya* (absolute Being) is properly understood then the erroneous concept of duality which has gained currency by accepting the soul and matter as two separate entities can be corrected.

Barkat Ali Sarmad in his Urdu article "Analysis of the doctrine of *Ruh*"² has rejected the popular notion that in the fourth or fifth month after conception *Ruh* (or soul) enters the lifeless foetus and infuses life therein; and when the *Ruh* leaves the body death occurs. Similarly on the Day when the Trumpet will be sounded souls will enter the resurrected bodies. The learned scholar observes that in the first instance the notion that foetus is lifeless and that at a later stage it is endowed with life is not correct. Secondly in the *ayah* 13 and 14 of *Surah Al Muminun* (23) various stages of development of the foetus are described. If life is instilled into it at a particular stage it ought to have been mentioned. The learned scholar further observes that the words *sakhrāju anfusa kum* occurring in *ayah* 93 of *Surah Al-An'am* (6) are generally interpreted as 'yield up your souls, or 'get your souls to come out of your bodies' which is not-correct. In fact it means 'Yield up yourselves' out of the agonies. When in *ayah* 2:84, 2:90 and 2:187 the word '*anfusakum*' is uniformly translated as 'yourselves' there is no justification to translate it as 'your souls' in *ayah* 6:93. Barkat Ali Sarmad draws the conclusion that the words *Ruh* and *Nafs* in the Qur'an are not used for soul.

It is generally but erroneously accepted that the Arabic words *Ruh* and *Nafs* are the equivalents for spirit or soul. Let us, therefore, examine as to what the Qur'an says about *Ruh* and *Nafs*.

Ruh

The word *Ruh* in different derivatives has occurred not less than 21 times in the Qur'an. It is derived from the root *Raha* meaning ease, comfort and expanse.

"There will be ease, and *Raihan*, (denoting comfort, and satisfaction) and gardens of tranquility for him". (56:89)

1. *Ruh* is used in the Qur'an to mean mercy and benevolence: "O people of the Book, Do not be fanatical in your faith and say nothing but the truth about Allah. The Messiah who is Isa, son of Maryam, was only an apostle of Allah and His prophecy, which He sent to Maryam, as a mercy, from Him '*ruhun minhu*' (Qur'an 4:171).

In this verse the Prophet Isa is mentioned as '*Ruh* proceeding from Allah. Here *Ruh* is personalized and some English translators (Mirza Abul Fazl and Ahmed Ali), have rendered it as mercy. The Prophet Muhammad(S) is also mentioned in the Qur'an as mercy from Allah " And We have not sent you but as a mercy to all the domains of existence

(Qur'an 21:107) "O sons go forth in search of Yusuf and his brother and do not despair the mercy of Allah (*ruhullah*) only they despair the mercy of Allah (*ruhullah*) who do not believe" (Qur'an 12:87).

Ruhullah and *Rahmatullah* have almost the same connotation: "Despair not the mercy of Allah" (Qur'an 29:53).

2. *Ruh* also refers to the noble elements in Man's origin, i.e., consciousness, righteousness, courage etc., that distinguish him from other living creatures. "And when I have fashioned him (man) and instilled into him (*Nafakatufihi*) by My order (*min ruhi*)" (Qur'an 15:29 see also 32:9) *Ruh* here stands for vital force, not soul. Man was created on the pattern of God's image, *fitrat* Allah, having the qualities of knowledge, deliberation and creativity. *Nafaktu fihi min ruhi*, means Allah imbibed these qualities into man. It is the *ruh* (Allah's *Amar* or decree) that gives perfection to human beings after birth.

Ruh stands for Allah's decree and not for soul. It means that when Allah created man He instilled into him the faculties of knowledge, deliberations and creativity, and also the ability to discern between right and wrong. Thus Man was created on a Divine pattern (*fitrat*-Allah). "God's breathing of His spirit (*ruh*) into man is obviously a metaphor for His endowing him with life and consciousness: that is, with a soul".^[1]

The Qur'an directs human beings to wholly surrender to the one and the only faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which Allah has instilled into Man (see 30:30). This process of instilling 'Natural disposition' is *nafaktu fihi min ruhi*. "The term *fitrah* rendered as 'natural disposition' connotes in this context man's inborn intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, true and false, and thus to sense God's existence and oneness".^[2]

The Qur'an divides the course of human life into two broad periods. The firstly, the period consists of two stages. One is the stage of man in the making. This is the stage of evolution of the human species, or the stage leading to the Man's making till he emerges from the mother's womb. This is the period which Qur'an refers to in the verse. "He hath created you by stages" (Qur'an 71:14). The period which begins with the moment when as the Qur'an states, the Spirit of God having been breathed into him, he receives the gift of hearing and seeing and feeling and thinking (Qur'an 32:8 and 9) and continues his course of life thereafter crossing the line what is termed 'death'.

3. *Ruh* also refers to incorporeal power as against physical power. In *ayaat* 2:87 and 2:253 it is mentioned that Allah strengthened the Prophet Isa with the holy spirit (*Ruhul Qudus*). Good and righteous men are strengthened by God with the holy spirit. The phrases, "*bi ruhim minhu*", a spirit from himself in *ayaat* 22 of *Surah* 58 is used in almost in the same sense as *Ruhul*

Qudus.

4. *Ruh* is also used in the Qur'an in the sense of instincts or divine revelation (*wahi*). Divine revelation is plainly called '*Ruhi*'.

a) "He (Allah) caused the angels to descend to bestow the divine inspiration (*ruh*), at his behest (*min amrihi*) upon whomever He wills of his servants...." (Qur'an 16:2). It may be noted that in this *ayah* *Ruh* is not something additional to the angels, but is something conveyed by them:

b) "They ask you about revelation (*Ruh*) say revelation (*Ruh*) is by/of the command (*Amr*) of my Lord, and that you have been granted but little of knowledge (thereof)" (Qur'an 17:85) It may be noted that those who asked about the '*ruh*' were the Jews. The belief in the immortal soul was not in Jewish tradition. They understood '*ruh*' as the source of prophecy. They wanted to know how the Prophet interpreted it. "Some commentators are of the opinion that it (the word *Ruh* in *ayah* 17:85) refers here, specifically to the revelation of the Qur'an; others understand by it the 'soul' in particular the soul of man. This latter interpretation is, however, unconvincing in as much as the preceding as well as the subsequent verses relate explicitly to the Qur'an and hence, to the phenomenon of divine revelation".

c) "Most exalted of position, Lord of Power, He directs inspiration by His command to any of His creatures as He wills to warn (men) of the Day of meeting". (Qur'an 40:15).

d) "On (this night) the angles and the revelation descend by the dispensation of their Lord, for setting all affairs" (Qur'an 97:4).

5. *Ruhul Ameen* is used in the Qur'an (26:193) for the trustworthy angel. There is almost a consensus of opinion among the exegetes that this reference is to the angel Gabriel: *Ruhul Qudus* in 2:87, 16:102 etc., however, signifies, holy revelation.

"To Musa We gave the Book and after him We sent other messengers. We gave Isa, son of Maryam, veritable signs and strengthened him with the Holy revelation (*Ruhul Qudus*) (*Injeel*)" (Qur'an 2:87).

From the above it is very clear that in the Qur'an *Ruh* is nowhere referred to as soul or spirit. The Qur'anic concept of *Ruh* is quite different from spirit as well as soul. There is no room either to render *Nafs* as soul.

NAFS

The word '*nafs*' is used in no less than 16 different connotations.¹

1.Life

“.... (angels say) ‘Give up your life (*nafs*); today you shall suffer ignominious punishment for uttering lies about Allah and rejecting His signs with arrogance”. (Qur’an 6:93)

“Believe in Allah and His Apostle, and strive in the way of Allah with your wealth and your life (*Nafs*)” (Qur’an 61:11)

2. Living beings

“We do not burden a living being ‘*nafs*’ but according to its capacity” (Qur’an 6:152).

3. Person or personage

“Take heed of the day when one person shall not avail another person (*nafs*) nor shall intercession be accepted”. (Qur’an 2:72)

“And when you (Prophet Moosa) killed a person (*nafs*) and fell into a dispute”. (Qur’an 2:72)

“Every person (*nafs*) shall lie in pledge for what he has earned”. (Qur’an 74:38)

Here ‘*nafs*’ has necessarily been rendered as ‘person’ because in the *ayaat* that follow these ‘*nafs*’ sitting in the garden (Paradise) will ask the evil doers as to what it is which has brought them to Hell.

“How shall it be when We gather them (unbelievers) together on a day that is certain to come when every (*nafs*) will receive the reward without being wronged”. (Qur’an 3:25)

4. Kindred or fellow beings

“ shed no blood amongst you nor turn your fellow beings (*anfusakum*) out of your homes” (Qur’an 2:84)

“ So wrong not your fellow beings (*anfusakum*) therein (sacred months)” (Qur’an 9:36)

5. Specie, kind

“Allah has provided mates for you of your own kind (*min anfusikum*)” (Qur’an 16:72)

6. Self

“Said Prophet Musa: ‘Will you enjoin good deeds on the others and forget your own self (*anfusukum*) . . .’” (Qur’an 2:44).

7. Mind, heart

“And hearts (*anfus*) are prone to greed (avarice)” (Qur’an 4:128)

“ . . . for you know what is in my heart (*Nafsi*) though I know not what is in Your heart (*nafsika*)” (Qur’an 5:116).

“And when they (brothers of Prophet Yusuf) entered (the city) in the manner their father (The Prophet Yaqub) had enjoined, it did not profit them in the least against (the plan of) Allah. It was but a necessity of (Prophet) Yaqub’s heart (*nafs*) which he discharged”. (Qur’an 12:68)

8. Distinguishing power

“(Call to witness) The *nafs* (distinguishing power) and its perfect balance. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and to its right. Truly he succeeds who purifies it (by utilising its distinguishing power) and he fails who corrupts it. (by letting it rust by disuse)”. (Qur’an 91:7-10)

9. Lust, vain desires, or false pride

“But he who entertained the fear of standing before His Lord and restrained his self (which is prone to evil) from lust or vain desires”. (Qur’an 79:40)

“Nor do I clear my own self (of blame). Verily the ‘*nafs*’ is prone to evil unless my Lord do bestow His mercy” (Qur’an 12:53)

“Remember, (the Prophet) Musa said: “My people! by taking this calf you have done harm to your own selves (*anfusakum*), so now turn in repentance to your Creator, and kill your false pride (*anfusakum*)” (Qur’an 2:54).

10. Progeny or coming generation

“..... but (plan) before-hand for your progeny (*lianfusakum*) and heed Allah.....” (Qur’an 2:223)

The word *Nafs* is often rendered as ‘soul’ or spirit. It should however, be clear from the above that nowhere in the Qur’an, is the word ‘*nafs*’ used to mean soul.

Soul, according to the so-called belief, is one of the two substances of

which human body is composed. 'Spoul' is generally regarded as non-physical ethereal substance. It is generally believed that a person dies when the soul departs from his physical body. The Qur'an does not appear to endorse the radical doctrine of mind-body dualism found in earlier manmade religions and philosophies.

"Such phrases as *al-nafs al-mutma-inna* (Qur'an 89:27) and *al-nafs al-lawwama* (Qur'an 75:2) (usually translated as 'The satisfied soul and the blaming soul') are best understood as states, aspects, dispositions or tendencies of the human personality. These may well be regarded as 'mental' (as distinguished from 'physical') in nature, provided the 'mind' is not construed as a separate substance".¹

1. See the present author's article: The Body Versus Soul concept and the Qur'an, Islam and Modern

Age, August 1998.

2. The Body Versus Soul Fallacy and The Qur'an - Islamic Culture, October 1940.

3. Latif, Syed Abdul - Al Qur'an rendered into English, Approach to the Study of Qur'an page XIX.

4. Note 101 of Surah 17 page 432.

16. 'Saba' and 'Saba'een'

('Saba' as in *ayah* 31:27 etc. and 'saba'een' as in *ayah* 9:80)

The words 'saba' and 'saba'een', 'sab'un', literally meaning seven and seventy respectively, are used in the Qur'an to indicate small and large unspecified numbers. They should not be taken exactly as seven or seventy.

"It is well known that in the Semitic languages, and most particularly in classical Arabic -- the number 'seven' is often used in the sense of 'several' or 'various' (c.f Lisan al Arab, Tagal-Arus etc).¹

The word 'saba' is used with reference to 'samawaat' and 'ardh' in the following *ayaat*: (2:29, 17:44, 23: 86, 41:12, 65:12, 67:3 and 71:15). In all these *ayaat* the word 'saba' signifies quite a few or many and not the number seven specifically.

Similarly *ayah* 2:201 can be rendered as follows:

"Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah (it) is like a grain of corn which puts forth seven ears, each ear containing hundred grains and

Allah multiplies for whom he pleases". (Qur'an 2:261)

It is very obvious that 'seven ears of corn' refers to many. The idea being that those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah will be rewarded umpteen fold.

The Prophet is addressed as follows:

"Even if you ask forgiveness for them (the hypocrites) seventy times, Allah will never forgive them." (Qur'an 9:80)

Here seventy is not mentioned as a definite number. It is used for 'any number of times'.

The words '*sab'un*' in *ayah* 69:32 and '*sab'een*' in *ayah* 7:155 are similarly not used for the number seventy but for a large un-specified number.

It is interesting to note that except in the following three *ayaat* 2:196 (where three days fast is prescribed during the pilgrimage and seven days after returning, making a total of ten), 18:22 (regarding the number of 'men of the cave' some will say that they were three and the fourth was their dog. Some will say they were five and their dog was the sixth. And yet some will say they were seven and their dog was the eighth'), and 69:7 (the tribe of *Aad* were destroyed by fierce roaming wind which was imposed on them for seven nights and eight days) in all other places the word '*saba*' is not used specifically for number seven.

The misunderstandings regarding some *ayaat* of the Qur'an, particularly the *ayah* 15:87 can be conveniently avoided if the metonymical use of the word '*saba*' is kept in view.

17. '*Saba Mathani*' (Qur'an 15: 87)

'*Saba Mathani*' is interpreted as the 'seven oft-repeated *ayaat*'. It occurs once in the Qur'an¹ and it is traditionally rendered as follows:

"And We bestowed upon you the 'seven oft-repeated' (*ayaat*) and the grand Qur'an." (Qur'an 15: 87)

In *Tafseer Bayan-ul-Subhan* (which is considered as the quintessence of all the exegesis of the Qur'an from the 3rd century to the fourteenth century) we find the following interpretation: '*Saba Masani*' refers to the seven long *Surahs* (*Surah Al Tawal*) i.e., (*Surah Al Baqara*, *Surah Ale-Imran*, *Surah Al-Nisa*, *Surah Al-Maida*, *Surah Al-Anaam*, *Surah Al-Araaf* and *Surah Yunus*).

This interpretation cannot be accepted for the simple reason that *Surah Al- Hajjr* (in which *Saba Mathani* is mentioned) is a Makki *Surah* and out of the

seven long *Surahs*; the first four are *Madani*; However, the reference to *ayaat* (if the interpretation is accepted that the reference is to seven *ayaat*) turns to reference to *Surah* (if the interpretation is accepted that the reference is to the seven long *surahs*).

Most of the exegetes are of the opinion that '*Saba Masani*' is the opening '*surah*', *Surah Al-Fateha*. The reason given for this interpretation is that the seven *ayaat* of *Surah Fateha* sum up the whole teaching of the Qur'an and that these *ayaat* are repeated daily by every Muslim in the daily prayer (*Salaat*), five times a day.

This interpretation cannot be accepted because *Surah Fateha* consists of only six and not seven *ayaat*. It may not be correct to include *Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim* as the first *ayah* as this rule is not being followed in the rest of the Qur'an.

It is mentioned in the *ayah* in question that Allah has given to the Prophet seven out of '*Masani*' (Qur'an 15:87). Even if *Bismillah* ... is added as the seventh *ayah* of *Surah Fateha*, the reference to *Surah Fateha* is not satisfactory. The purport of *ayah* 15:87 is that out of many, seven are given to the Prophet.

The question whether '*Saban minal Mathani*' and the Qur'an Azeem are two separate entities or *Saba Masani* is part of the Qur'an is crucial.

In the Qur'an several words are used for the Qur'an and everywhere it refers to the entire Qur'an e.g.

"Verily We have sent thee a message from Our presence" (Qur'an 20:99).

When such is the case, how is it possible to say that *surah Fateha* is not a part of the Qur'an. In the same *Surah*, *ayaat* 89 to 92 say: "and say I am only a plain warner of wrath sent down on those who divided the scripture into arbitrary parts. Therefore, We will surely call them to account." Here the earlier scriptures have been referred to as Qur'an, and those who have divided the scriptures have been warned that they will be questioned for doing so. Considering the very first *Surah* of the Qur'an as a separate entity therefore falls within the mischief mentioned in the above ordinance.

In the *ayah* in question '*saban minal mathani*' is shown other than the Qur'an. When it is clear that these 'seven oft-repeated' are not the *ayaat* of *Surah Fateha* of the Qur'an, then what are they which are seven in number and are also oft-repeated?

One more point is to be borne in mind: the word '*saba*' literally meaning seven is often used in the Qur'an to indicate un-specified number. This word need not to be taken exactly as seven. In the *ayah* in question, also the

word '*aba*' has to be interpreted as an un-specified number.

'The oft-repeated' obviously, are earlier revelations. They contained ordinances from the same Book repeating each statement (of the ultimate truth) in manifold forms. Thus they are referred to as 'oft-repeated'.

The Prophet of Islam has confirmed the divinity of the earlier scriptures and thus it can be said that the earlier revelations have been given to his charge both to confirm their being Divine Revelations and also to point out the man made interpolations therein with the help of the Qur'an which is also *Al-Furqan* (that which differentiates truth from falsehood).

The correct understanding of the following *ayah* will be helpful to fully appreciate the above explanation:

"Allah has revealed (The Qur'an as) the best discourse (*ahsanal-hadith*), (in the form of Book) having resemblance (with the earlier messages) and repeating (each statement of the truth in manifold forms (*mutashaabi-ham-mathaaniya*))" (Qur'an 39:23).

The word '*ayah*' is not explicitly used in *ayah* 15:87. In spite of divergent interpretations, there is however, consensus of opinion among all the exegetes that '*mathani*', whatever it is, implies '*ayaat*'. If we take '*ayaat*' in their wider meaning i.e., 'messages', the understanding of the words '*sabaminal masani*' becomes easy.

In view of the above, the *ayah* 15:87 can be rendered as follows:

"And indeed We have bestowed upon Thee several of the oft-repeated (earlier messages) and this sublime Qur'an."

18. Sittat Ayyam

The Qur'an declares:

"Verily your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days" (Qur'an 7:54).

In this *ayah* as well as in six more *ayaat*, i.e. (10:3, 11:7, 25:59, 32:4, 50:38 and 57:4) it is mentioned that the heavens and the earth were created in six days. The creation in six days is to be taken as metaphorical. The Qur'an says:

"Verily a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you count" (Qur'an 22:4).

Again the Qur'an says:

"The angels (*malaikah*) and the spirit (*ruh*) gradually attained it (chastisement) in a day whose length is fifty thousand years" (Qur'an 70:4).

In the above *ayaat* thousand years or fifty thousand years cannot be taken literally. One thing, however, is certain that the 'day' mentioned in the above seven *ayaat* is to be construed not as our day of 24 hours, but as stages of creation or spans in the evolution of physical nature.

Regarding the creation of the earth the Qur'an says:

"Is it that you deny Him who created the earth in two days?" (Qur'an 41:9)

Regarding setting of the mountains on earth and bestowing blessings etc, it is mentioned that this was done in four days (Qur'an 41:10).

Regarding the skies, it is mentioned that they were created in two days (Qur'an 41:12). Some exegetes are of the opinion that the four days mentioned in *ayah* 10 include the two days mentioned in *ayah* 9. Thus the total period for the creation of the world comes to six days.

Creation of man in various stages is also mentioned at another place:

"When He has created you in various stages." (Qur'an 71:14)

It is outside the scope of the present study to mention various stages, in which all that we find on earth was created. The present day science fixes the period in this way: The first stage commenced from the time when the earth was thrown out of the sun. The second stage began when the earth became fit for organic life. The third stage began when the first germ of life, the protoplasm, emerged. The fourth stage began when all kinds of animal life came into being. In the fifth stage life assumed its present form. In the sixth stage, man assumed intellect and other faculties. The various stages of the physical growth of man are mentioned in the Qur'an comprehensively and in literary beauty. These words are most appropriate for the first addressees of the Qur'an in the same way as they are for those of today.

19. Sidratil Muntaha (Qur'an 53:14 and 16)

The name '*Sidran*' occurring in *ayaat* 34: 16 and 56: 28 is used in its literal meaning. *Sidratil Muntaha* occurs in *ayah* 14 of *Surah An-Najm* which is as follows:

"Near '*sidratil muntaha*' beyond which none may pass". (Qur'an 53: 14)

It is generally said that '*sidratil muntaha*' refers to the lote tree in the seventh heaven having its roots in the sixth heaven, '*sidratil muntaha*', however, conveys quite a different meaning from the literal meaning of its components. In this *ayah* it is used as an idiom, meaning the ultimate point of access for human intelligence. It is used to convey the idea of the high position of the Prophet .

In *Surah An-Najm*, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) is "defended from three kinds of charges that the unbelievers brought against him: 1) That he was going astray either through defect of intelligence or through carelessness; 2) That he was being misled or deceived by evil spirits; 3) That he spoke out of a whim or impulse, or from a selfish desire to impress his own personality. None of these charges was true. On the contrary, he had direct inspiration from God".¹

While defending the Prophet, the nearness of the Prophet to Allah is expressed by the words '*qaba qausain*' in *ayah* 9 of the same *surah*, which is not indicative of physical nearness. It was shown that the mission of the Prophet and his teachings were identical with the Divine Will and Divine Design (see explanation of Captivating Word '*Qaba Qausain*').

In continuation to the above, it is mentioned in the subsequent *ayaat* that:

"Allah did reveal to His bondsman what He revealed. His heart did not falsify regarding what he perceived. Will you dispute with him as to what he saw? He saw Him indeed in the course of another descent by the '*sidratil muntaha*', which none can pass, close to which is the 'Garden of Tranquillity', where the 'sidra tree' was covered over with what it was covered over". (Qur'an 53: 10 to 16).

Thus while defending the Prophet, his highest position is indicated by showing his intellectual excellence above all human beings.

Owing to the abundance of its leafy shade, the '*sidr*' (cedar of Lebanon) appears in the Qur'an as a symbol of the 'shade' i.e., peace and fulfillment of Paradise. '*Al-Muntaha*' is indicative of the fact that Allah has set a definite limit to all knowledge accessible to created beings. "Human knowledge, though potentially vast and penetrating, can never ---- not even in Paradise (the 'garden of promise' mentioned in the next verse) ---- attain to an understanding of the ultimate reality, which the creator has reserved for Himself".¹

The Prophet is said to have been made to see some of the ultimate truths.

In a similar *ayah*, good tidings are given to Prophet that 'soon your Lord will raise you to a most exalted (praiseworthy) station': '*Muqaame Mahmood*'.

(Qur'an 17: 79)

The promised station, here cannot be localized in physical terms. It is the glorious status that Allah has promised to give to the Prophet (in his life time as well as in the Hereafter).

The word '*Sidratil Muntaha*' also is not a place and has nothing to do with the Sidra Tree. It is to show intellectual excellence of the Prophet.

The miracle upon which the Prophet's eye was able to look steadfastly was one of the theosophanies in his experience. It is impossible not to see in it a reminiscence of the burning bush, in the Old Testament.

'And the angel of the Lord appeared unto (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed' (Exodus 3:2).

It is also reminiscent of the enlightenment of the Prophet Zulkifl (Lord Buddha) under the Bo-Tree.

It is the beauty of the Qur'an that a meaningful expression is given to the earlier concepts.

20. *Sahar*

Magic, witchcraft, sorcery etc. are represented by one comprehensive word '*sahar*' in the Qur'an. The word '*sahar*' along with other derivatives is used 63 times in the Qur'an¹. '*Sahar*' is shown in the Qur'an to be a tool in the hands of the unbelievers to oppose the Prophets by alleging that they (the prophets) were magicians.

As '*batil*' according to the Qur'an has a temporary phase and is bound to perish (Qur'an 17:81), '*sahar*' also, as tools in the hands of the '*batil*' is of a temporary phase and will perish when confronted with the tools of '*al-haqq*'. '*Sahar*' can only be a test for the believers. It can impress uncertain and weak minds, but if resisted with real faith and determination, it will be rendered ineffective (Qur'an 7: 116, 26: 45).

The word '*sahar*' has also been used as an accusation of the unbelievers against the Prophets that their teachings are '*sahar*' (Qur'an 5: 110, 6: 7, 11: 7, 20: 57). This only shows that '*sahar*' is used in the Qur'an as a phenomenon which is unworthy and that no truth is contained therein. The Qur'an has denied their (unbelievers') allegation that it (the Qur'an) or other revealed teachings are magic. This itself proves that '*sahar*' is ephemeral.

'*Sahar*' is a thing which attracts people irrespective of the fact whether it manifests its power or not (Qur'an 10: 77).

According to the great exegete Imam Fakhruddin Raazi (d.606/1209-10 AD) 'sahar' means a lie. The renowned exegete Shaikh Muhammad Abduh absolutely denies the reality of 'sahar'. Ahmed ibn' Ali as Jassas (d. 370/981) in his famous *tasfir 'Ahkam al Qur'an* says that there is no such thing as sorcery, and that it is merely a form of trickery. He says that the word 'sahar' applies to everything or action used for the purpose of deceiving and misleading others.

The unbelievers frequently accused the prophets by alleging that their '*ayaat*' were '*sahar*'. This was due to the following reasons:

- i) In ignorant reaction, they termed the teachings of the Prophets as magic. In some ancient man-made religions, magic was the only potent agency which could be understood. Egyptians, for example, had no such thing as religion; they had only '*hiks*'; the nearest equivalent of which is magical power. '*Sahar*' is referred to in the Qur'an as power against the clear '*ayaat*' brought by the Prophets, although this confrontation (of magic against the '*ayaat*') is posed by the unbelievers. (Qur'an 20:58) etc.
- ii) In utter disgust when they were not able to rebut the convincing arguments of the Prophets, they took shelter under the accusation.
- iii) To avoid the clear message from Allah and to divert the minds of the fellow nonbelievers. (Qur'an 54: 2).
- iv) When the unbelievers due to their own obstinacy and pugnacity, did not accept even the clear and convincing '*ayaat*' of the Prophets, the Qur'an says that even if the Book were sent in material form which the unbelievers could touch and see, they would still reject it taking the shelter of the accusation that it is clear magic. (Qur'an 6: 7).
- v) Magic and sorcery were generally and widely accepted as undesirable and unworthy practices and the sorcerer was considered equal to a liar (Qur'an 38: 4, 40: 24).

The Qur'an has strongly opposed '*sahar*'. The Qur'an enjoins the Prophet as follows:

"Therefore proclaim the praises (of your Lord), for by the grace of your Lord, you are no (vulgar) soothsayer, nor you are one possessed." (Qur'an 52: 29)

Basically magic is an evil practice. The power of magic is limited to the extent to which Allah permits.

Allah protects all who seek His guidance from all such evils.

Apart from the harm that magicians claim to inflict on others, the chief

harm they do is to their own souls. This the Qur'an has established by equating the sorcerer (*saahir*) with a mad person (*majnun*).

"The main allegation against Christ was that the clear signs he brought were nothing but magic". (Qur'an 5: 110).

The very same allegations were made against all other Prophets also, including Prophet Muhammad (S).

Stories of Jewish origin suggesting that Prophet Sulyaman had practised sorcery and the tradition saying that the Prophet Muhammad had been affected by a Jewish witch, and had been for a time in a state of confusion about his own actions, have been strongly rejected by the eminent exegete Jassas.

The generally accepted belief that '*sahar*' is a reality needs to be re-examined.

21. *Shajara* (Qur'an 2: 35)

The Qur'an Says:

"And We said to Adam: 'Both you and your spouse live in the garden, eat freely to your fill wherever you like, but do not approach (go near) this tree (*shajara*) or you will become transgressors". (Qur'an 2: 35)

We find almost similar *ayaat* in *Surah Al-Araf* (Qur'an 7: 19 & 20: 120)

In these *ayaat* no reference is made to the nature of the tree i.e., no particular tree is identified.

Some of the exegetes of the Qur'an like Abdulla Yusuf Ali & Abdul Majid Daryabadi have refrained from identifying the tree.

Most of the translators of the Qur'an and the exegetes more or less agree that the word '*shajara*' refers to a tree. Very few have opined that it refers to the Tree of Evil or Tree of knowledge.

Those who are of the view that '*shajara*' refers to a tree could not agree as to which particular kind of tree it refers to. As they have presumed that going near the tree amounts to eating its produce or fruits, they have suggested the following: (i) Fig (ii) Date (iii) Grape (iv) Campher etc. Most of the commentators consider that this forbidden tree was the wheat plant. The scholars agree that Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat fruits of one of the above trees. No scholar has given satisfactory and convincing argument in support of his preference for any fruit. The scholars who are of the opinion that the reference is to wheat or grape have not taken the fact into

consideration that wheat is the yield of a plant and grape of a creeper. The Qur'an used the word '*Al Najm*' for creeper or plant (see Qur'an 55: 6).

The proposition now advanced is that '*shajara*' does not refer to a tree. If '*shajara*' is considered as tree, the question arises as to why it has been allowed to remain nameless and unspecified in the Qur'an.

From the popular interpretation of the above *ayaat* the following points arise:

i) Adam and Eve were ordered not to go near '*shajara*'. The word 'do not eat' was not mentioned. In the Qur'an wherever there are orders not to eat something, the word '*la ta klu*' has invariably been used, as in *ayaat* 4: 2, 3: 1 & 6: 121. If '*shajara*' really refers to a tree or its fruits, the words '*la ta klu*' would have been used instead of ordering not to go near the tree. Moreover the words, "Do not go near" are used in other *ayaat* of the Qur'an. These words are used for not going near fornication (Qur'an 17:32), going near indecencies (Qur'an 6: 152), going near wives untill they have become clean (Qur'an 2:222), going near wives while one is staying in the mosque (Qur'an 2:187).

In the above *ayaat* not only fornication etc., are forbidden but it is also enjoined upon men not to go near them, thus avoiding even the opportunities which are likely to tempt one to commit them.

Even if 'going near' can be inferred as eating, the order is 'not to go near the tree'. "If the word '*shajara*' was meant to be a tree whose fruit was forbidden, command would have been not to eat its fruit and not 'not to go near it'.¹ There is no reference of the fruits in the above *ayaat*. By no stretch of imagination can the conclusion be drawn that the restriction is imposed to eat the produce. Moreover it is against the verdict of the Qur'an regarding the fruits of heaven that there is no restriction on their use. (Qur'an 56: 32 & 33)

2) When Adam and Eve committed disobedience, the Qur'an uses the words "*zaqal shajara*" "When they had tasted the tree". (Qur'an 7: 22) The question of tasting a tree does not arise as a tree cannot be tasted. If the fruit of a tree such as wheat or grape was forbidden the fruit itself would have been mentioned specifically. It only shows that '*shajara*' cannot be interpreted as 'tree'.

The word 'tasting' (*zaqa*) is used in the Qur'an not in the sense of eating but it is used in connection with various kinds of experiences. This is evident from the following *ayaat* of the Qur'an wherein the word '*zaqa*' is used:

"Taste the chastisement of fire, which you wont to deny". (Qur'an 34: 42)

"They shall not taste death therein (Paradise)" (Qur'an 44: 56).

“They shall not taste cold therein (Hell)” (Qur’an 78: 24).

The scholars who interpreted ‘*shajara*’ as Tree or evil include, Abdulla Yusuf Ali, Moulana Mohammed Ali (of Lahore) Niaz Fatehpuri etc.

Although Moulvi Muhammad Ali strongly denies, the interpretation is borrowed from the Old Testament. In the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, we find:

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou should not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”. (Qur’an 2:16 and 17)

In fact the Qur’an has used the word ‘*Al shajara*’ for progeniture or for begetting of offspring.

“It is only through the progeny of Adam, the result of the union of the sexes, that the race of mankind attains a perpetual existence.”¹

“Thus it will be seen that the forbidden tree is no other than the sexual act and God took a covenant from Adam that he would not indulge in it before he was permitted to do so as is given in verse XX. 115: ‘And we had beforehand made a covenant with Adam but he forgot and We found on his part no firm resolve’”.¹

“The word ‘tree’ is used for the sexual act because just as a seed when planted in the soil gradually assumes its stature as a full-grown tree and produces in its turn millions of seeds to propagate the species, a similar process takes place for the propagation of the human species by the sexual act. That is why the genealogy of man is represented in the form of a tree and on this account only the word ‘*shajara*’ is used for the geneology of man in the Arabic tongue. The Qur’an also compares the creation of man with the creation of a tree in these words:

‘And Allah has made you grow out of the earth in the manner of a plant.’ (Qur’an LXXI. 18)”.²

It is in accordance with the style of the Qur’an that the ‘sexual act’ is referred to by the word ‘*shajara*’.

Allah, so as to test them and their proclivities, prohibited Adam and Eve from indulging in sex. They were also told that if they disobey the orders, Allah would consider them as wrong-doers. It is not necessary to delve into a discussion about what was the particular reason underlying the prohibition. The actual reason for the prohibition may not be any particular

evil inherent in sex; The prohibition was perhaps to test the pair and thereby make it realise its inherent weakness. It was indeed a trial for both of them and they could not keep their covenant with Allah.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that in the above *ayah* itself both Adam and Eve have been addressed together. This interpretation is further supported in the *ayah* 7: 20 wherein *Satan* whispering to them (Adam and Eve) is mentioned, "to show them both their private parts which have gone unnoticed by either of them". (Qur'an 7: 20) In the other *ayah* also it is mentioned that "once they had tasted the '*Al shajara*' their private parts became apparent to both of them" (Qur'an 7: 22).

"Again to emphasize that the word '*shajara*' is not used in the meaning of a tree, it is said: 'They both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden'. (vii. 22). Here the word *shajara* (tree) is avoided and in its place 'garden' is used so that the meaning of the word *shajara* which is used a few words earlier in a different sense may not be confused with a tree the leaves of which they sought to cover their nakedness".¹

The first sin of disobedience committed by Adam and his wife was pardoned by Allah because the order of not going near sex was only a test and to make man realise that he should restrain temptations. In matter of sex "man was created weak". Says the Qur'an: 4: 28.

22. *Sadaqa*

Sadaqa is derived from the root '*sadaqa*' meaning to be righteous or truthful. In the Qur'an it is used for almsgiving or charity vide (Qur'an 2:265) *Saddiq* (plural, '*sadiqin*' and '*siddiqin*') is a person who perseveres (in righteousness) (Qur'an 33:35 & 4:69).

'*Sadiqin*' and '*siddiqin*' are the band of people that the Qur'an aims to form by building up their minds in its own fashion to create a healthy society.

'*Sadaqa*' as verb means to speak the truth. This points to the fact, that the giving of alms by a Muslim is itself an expression of truthfulness of a person and his belief.

The Qur'an equates the truthful with the "God conscious" (*muttaqin*):

"True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west but truly pious is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance however much he himself may cherish it upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and renders

the purifying dues; and (truly pious are) they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proven themselves true, and it is they, who are conscious of Allah." (Qur'an 2: 177).

The word '*sadaqa*' is used in two different senses. In the first place it is employed as synonymous with '*zakaat*' i.e., the poor rate which is obligatory and of which the rate is fixed:

"Alms (*sadaqaat*) are (meant) only for the poor and the needy and for those who are in charge thereof (officials entrusted with the collection and administration of '*Zakaat* funds'), and for those whose hearts are to be won over, and for (redemption of) those in captivity and for those who are in debt, and for the cause of Allah (*fi sabeelillah*) and for the way-farers." (Qur'an 9: 60).

In this *ayah* the word '*sadaqa*' refers to '*zakaat*'. The term '*zakaat*' is covered by '*sadaqa*'.

The other use of the word '*sadaqa*' is in the sense of voluntary alms-giving:

"A kind word and forbearance are better than alms-giving (*sadaqa*) accompanied by taunts". (Qur'an 2: 263)

According to this *ayah*, the attitude of the person who gives charity (*sadaqa*) is also important.

23. *Arsh, Kursi*

The root '*arasha*' means to construct a house, to put a roof to. The word *Al-Arsh* literally means roof, high raised dais, rostrum or throne.

In the following *ayaat* it is mentioned that Allah established himself upon the throne: (Qur'an 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4 and 57:4).

Allah is referred to as the Lord of the Throne:

".....He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne." (Qur'an 9:129).

The main purpose of mentioning Allah as the Master of the Throne is to emphasize that Allah is the effective controller of the entire universe.

Some commentators have stated that *Al-Arsh* is a throne made of gold and jewels and that its legs are supported by angels etc., as if *Al-Arsh* has a physical existence.

No doubt the basic principle is to interpret the Qur'an through the

apparent meanings of the component words. However, there are many *ayaatin* in the Qur'an wherein 'Allah's hand', 'Allah's face', 'Allah's cable' etc., are mentioned. Allah is free from physical attributes which arise in human mind, due to its own limitations. The Qur'an has used human language to explain certain concepts. Throne, being a symbol of authority, the word *Al-Arsh* has been used to denote the power and vigilance of Allah.

The meaning of '*arsh*' can clearly be understood from the *ayah* 11:7 wherein it is stated that "His *arsh*" was over the waters. Here *Arsh* cannot be interpreted as throne. If '*arsh*' is interpreted as authority the statement in *ayah* 11:7 becomes a statement of fact, as all life evolved out of the waters, *ayah* 21:30.

It is not possible for the human mind to have a more clear concept as to how Allah is exercising His authority over the universe. The main purpose is to explain that after Allah created the universe, He did not dissociate Himself for a moment. He is running the affairs of the universe without the break of a single moment and without the help of any vicegerent.

Similarly the literal meaning of '*Al-Kursi*' is chair. This word has been used twice in the Qur'an in the following *ayaat*:

"His (Allah's) *Kursi* extends over the heaven and the earth." (Qur'an 2:255)

"And we did test Prophet Sulayman: We placed on his *Kursi* a body, but he did turn (to us in true devotion)." (Qur'an 38:34).

In the latter *ayah* '*Kursi*' is used with reference to Prophet Sulayman. Here the literal meaning can be taken and '*kursi*' can be rendered as 'chair' or 'throne'.

In the earlier *ayah* (2:255) however, Allah's '*Kursi*' is mentioned, hence the literal meaning cannot be taken as chair or throne. Allah's *Kursi* here denotes the power, knowledge, sovereignty and authority of Allah which extends over the heavens and the earth. The scholars who subscribe to the view that '*Kursi*' in *ayah* 2 : 255 is used in its literal sense, emphasize that both the nature and modality of Allah's *Kursi* is not known to man.

Both, '*Al-Arsh*' and '*Al-Kursi*' are symbols of Allah's authority, power and vigilance extending over the entire universe.

Thus '*Al-Arsh*' and '*Al-Kursi*' are examples of metonymy in the Qur'an. Furthermore, '*Al-Arsh*', '*Al-kursi*' and many other words of this nature in the Qur'an are used to enable human beings, to comprehend the attributes of Allah.

24. *Amal*

Amal is derived from the root, '*amila*' meaning to be active, to do, make, act, work or operate.

The literal meaning of '*amal*' is act, action, work and deed. This word is used in the Qur'an both for good deed or righteous action (Qur'an 9:120 etc.) as well as for evil action (Qur'an 5:90 etc.).

This word is used in the Qur'an along with faith i.e. '*Iman*' with equal emphasis on both. Just as faith without action is undesirable, so also good actions without faith are futile. The Qur'an lays great emphasis on good actions along with right faith. In Christianity as expounded by St. Paul, no stress has been laid on good actions nor they are felt to be necessary. Faith in Jesus is sufficient for salvation. To reform this later corruption in Christianity the Qur'an lays much emphasis on good and righteous actions.

The Qur'an uses the terms '*hasanah*' and '*sayyiah*' in relation to the deed (*amal*). '*aamalul-hasanah*' is used for good deeds and '*aamalus sayyiah*' for evil deeds. '*husn*' signifies proper proportion. '*Hasanat*' signifies the acts that are '*haseen*' (beautiful) or result in the creation of '*husn*' (beauty). When a person's conduct is in accordance with the Divine Law, every act of his helps to bring about '*husn*' in his own personality. Such acts are also conducive to the maintenance of equilibrium and proportion in society.

The Qur'an describes various attributes of Allah. These are termed as '*asmaaul-hasanah*' that is, attributes that are blended in one Being in perfect proportion. According to the Qur'an, the proper way of attaining fulfillment of human personality is, that man should, within human limits inculcate in himself at least some of the attributes of Allah.

'*Sayyiah*' is antonym of '*hasanah*'. The conduct that is described in the Qur'an as '*aamalus sayyiah*' stands for deeds that upset the balance of the individual personality and result in dis-proportion in the social order.

'*Uswatun hasanah*' means good example worthy of imitation. The Qur'an has prescribed for those who look to Allah and the Day of Resurrection and remember Allah frequently to follow the life of the Prophet Muhammad (S) as a good pattern, '*uswatun hasanah*':

"Verily in the Apostle of Allah you have a good example for everyone who looks forward (with hope and fear) to Allah and to the Last Day, and remembers Allah unceasingly." (Qur'an 33:21)

25. *Aghfir Lana* (Qur'an 2:286)

The word '*aghfir*' is derived from the root '*ghafara*', meaning to hide, to

cover or to protect. It is generally rendered as 'forgive us.' The meaning 'forgive us' is not the literal meaning, but only an implied one. According to the Qur'an, '*ghafara*' (in all the derivatives) in relation to sin, refers to protection against sin in two ways: first, to save a sinner from punishment for his sins; second to protect a human being against committing the sin itself.

If this interpretation of '*ghafara*' meaning protection from punishment, is accepted, as some lexicographers have stated, even then a human being is protected in two ways by protecting him from sin which can result in punishment, and by saving him from punishment due to sin already committed.

Ghaffar, *Ghafoor* and *Ghafir* which are the attributes of Allah, also contain these two meanings.

Allah being '*ghafoor*' means exactly, that Allah protects a human being from sin and prevents him from committing it.

The Qur'an has used three words which are close to the English word 'forgive': viz, '*afa*' meaning to forget or to obliterate from one's mind, '*safaha*' meaning to ignore or to treat a matter as if it has not been taken notice of, and '*ghafara*' meaning to protect or to provide shelter (64:14). In some places in the Qur'an '*ghafara*' means, protection against punishment for sin already committed, for example:

"Verily Allah does not protect (*laa yaghfir*) the ascribing of divinity to aught beside Him, although He forgives (*yaghfir*) any lesser sin unto whoever He wills: for he who ascribes divinity to aught beside Allah has indeed contrived an awesome sin. " (Qur'an 4:48)

"Verily Allah does not protect (*laa yaghfir*) the ascribing of divinity to aught beside Him, although He forgives (*yaghfir*) lesser sin unto whomever He wills; for those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah have indeed gone far astray." (Qur'an 4:116).

In other places it means protecting one from committing the sin itself. For example:

".....forgive us and protect us. (from committing sin) and have mercy upon us" (Qur'an 2:286)

Simultaneous use of the words '*afu anna*' 'and' *aghfir lana*' in the above *ayah* makes it very clear that '*afu anna*' means 'forgive us' (from the sins already committed) and '*aghfir lana*' means protect us (from committing sins).

"Those who say 'O our Sustainer; Behold, we believe (in Thee); protect us, then, from our sins and keep us safe from suffering through the fire'".

(Qur'an 3:16)

It is evident from this *ayah* that the prayer '*faghfirlana zunubana*' is after the affirmation of belief. Previous sins are already forgiven after the acceptance of faith, '*faghfirlana*' refers to protection from 'future sins', and not to forgiveness. therefore, the prayer refers to a supplication, that the person be protected from committing any sin in future.

In the following *ayaat* of the Qur'an there is provision for both the literal meaning and the implied meaning.:

"So that Allah might show his forgiveness of all your faults, past as well as future and (thus) bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings".
(Qur'an 48:2)

In this *ayah*, '*yaghfirlaka*' of past faults denotes forgiveness, whereas *yaghfirlaka* of future faults denotes protection from committing faults in future.

"--- We have heard, and we pay heed, grant us your protection, O our Sustainer, for with You is all journey's end" (Qur'an 2:285).

In this *ayah* also '*aghfirlana*' has to be rendered in its literal sense. It is rather unfortunate that the implied meaning is generally adopted and the literal meaning is mostly overlooked. In the use of all the derivatives (from the root *ghafara*) in the Qur'an both the meanings are positively evident.

Wherever the two words '*afu*' and '*ghafara*' have been used together in the Qur'an, the word '*afu*' precedes the word '*ghafara*.' '*Afu*' means forgiveness i.e. to save a person from the punishment for sin and '*ghafara*' means to protect him from committing the sin itself. Thus wherever the two words have been used concurrently, '*ghafara*' cannot mean any thing except protection against (commitment of) sin.

Similarly '*aghfirlana*' in the following *ayah* has to be interpreted in its literal meaning:

"O you who have attained to faith! Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance. It may well be that your Sustainer will efface from you your bad deeds, and will admit you into the gardens through which running water flows, on a Day on which Allah will not shame the Prophet and those who share his faith: their light will spread rapidly before them and on their right (and) they will pray: 'our Sustainer! Cause this our light to shine for us forever, and protect us for verily, Thou hast the power to will anything'.
(Qur'an 66:8)

It is evident from the above *ayah* that '*istighfar*' will be necessary even in

Paradise. The meaning of '*istighfar*' cannot be forgiveness, at least in this context, because entrance into Paradise will be possible only after the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, '*aghfirlana*' should be taken in its literal meaning which is 'take us into Thy protection.'

In the following *ayah* different derivatives of the root '*ghafara*' have been used four times:

"(And) whether you do pray (unto Allah) that they be forgiven or do not pray for them - (it will all be the same: for even) if you were to pray seventy times that they be forgiven, Allah will not forgive them, seeing that they are bent on denying Allah and His Apostle. And Allah does not bestow His guidance upon such iniquitous folk" (Qur'an 9:80).

26. *Ghair Mammun* (Qur'an 41:8, 68:3, 95:6)

This word has generally been translated as un-failing, un-ending reward.

The word '*ghair mammun*' is derived from the root '*mann*' and means 'favored.' It occurs in *ayah* 164 of *Surah Al-e-Imran*. Translation of the *ayah* is as follows:

"Allah did confer a great favor on His believers."

The word '*mann*' occurs in *ayah* 94 of *Surah An-Nisa* also. Translation of the later part of the *ayah* is as follows:

"..... Even thus were you yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favor." (Qur'an 4:94)

Again the word '*mann*' has occurred thrice in *ayah* 17 of *Surah Al-Hujrat*. In all three places, the word '*mann*' means favor. Translation of the *ayah* is as follows:

"They impress on you as a favor that they have accepted Islam. Say deem not your surrender a favor upon me; Nay! Allah has conferred a favor upon you in as much as He has guided you to believe, if you are sincere." (Qur'an 49:17)

In many other places in the Quran including *ayaat* 14:11, 37:114, 47:4, 74:6, the word '*mann*' means favor, bounty, generosity, grace etc.

In *ayah* 57 of *Surah Al-Baqara* it is mentioned that Allah sent '*manna wa salwa*' to Bani Israel. '*Mann*' is a gummy saccharine secretion found on a species of Tamarisk. '*Salwa*' means quails (a kind of bird). Since '*manna wa salwa*' were sent as a favor and consolation from Allah, the sweet gummy substance derived the name '*mann*' which is indicative of favor and

'quail' derived the name '*salwa*' which is indicative of consolation

As the word '*mamnun*' means favored, it is almost synonymous with '*ihsan*'. It is discretionary and not obligatory. '*Ghair mamnun*' therefore means obligatory, binding or compulsory. Allah in His bounty decreed that He will reward men with faith and good action as an obligation or as His responsibility.

Translation of *ayah* 3 of *Surah* 68 will be as follows:

"And, verily, thine is a meed and no favour." (68:3)

Translation of *ayah* 8 of *Surah Ha-Mim-Sajdah* will be as follows:

"Verily those who believe and do the right, for them is a recompense without favour." (Qur'an 41:8)

Similarly the translation of *ayah* 6 of *Surah* 95 will be as follows:

"Here is a reward for them which is not discretionary but it will be given as an earned right which is their due." (Qur'an 95:6)

In spite of the fact that Allah regards the reward of faith and good action as a due right, He still reserves His right to bestow His favour in addition to the due reward.

Translation of *ayah* 173 of *Surah An-Nisa* is as follows:

"But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards - and more, out of His bounty." (Qur'an 4:173)

Giving reward as a bounty and as an arbitrary favour over and above what one deserves is made clear in the following *ayah* "That Allah may reward them for the best of their deeds, and bestow more on them of His bounty" (Qur'an 24:38).

'*Ajar ghair mamnun*', therefore, means a well deserved reward or recompense which is unencumbered with arbitrary favour. In case of any favour, the favoured one will be under the obligation of the person who has favoured. '*Ajar ghair mamnun*' is a reward which is free of any such obligation.

27. Falaah

Falaah means success, welfare, prosperity, freedom from anxiety and care. It is to be understood in a wide sense to include propriety in our worldly affairs as well as in intellectual progress. In both cases it implies happiness and the attainment of our ambitions purified by devotion and

commitment to the will of Allah.

In the call for prayers (*adhaan*) the believers are simultaneously called for '*salaat*' and '*falaah*'. This only implies that '*falaah*' or welfare is the obvious result of '*salaat*' when it is established in society.

The ideal Muslim community is happy, contented, untroubled by conflicts or stress, sure of itself, strong, united and prosperous.

Muflihiin are those who have achieved the real success through the teachings of Islam. *Muflihiin* are a band of people that the Qur'an aims to form by building up their minds in its own fashion to create a healthy society. *Falaah* is different from '*fauz*' meaning achievement and accomplishment.

The opposite of '*falaah*' is '*adhaab*'.

28. '*Falak*' (Qur'an 21:33 and 36:40) and '*Sama*' (Qur'an 13:2 etc.)

The general notion that both '*sama*' and '*falak*' are synonyms is not correct. The influence of Greek and Iranian philosophy is responsible for the theory of synonymity. The Spanish scholar Qazi Manzar Bin Sayeed also regards '*sama*' and '*falak*' as two different things.

Falak:

'*Falak*' is derived from the root '*falaka*' meaning 'to be round'. It applies to boat or ark, whose shape in ancient times used to be round. Hence, the word was applied to the orbits of the celestial bodies which are also round.

In the Qur'an also the word '*falak*' is in some *ayaat* used to denote the orbit in which the celestial bodies move. Says the Qur'an:

"It is He who created night and day, and sun and the moon, each floating in an orbit." (Qur'an 21:33).

"Neither can the sun overtake the moon nor the night outpace the day: Each of them keeps coursing in its orbit" (Qur'an 36:40).

In this sense the '*falak*' of every heavenly body will be different one.

It may be noted that '*falak*' does not signify the English word sky.¹

Sama:

Sama is derived from the root '*samawa*' meaning height. According to Imam Razi, '*sama*' is that cloud which is high above in the sky. It got the name

because of its height. *Imam Baidawi* says '*sama*' denotes height. This word is used for high altitude. The roof of a house is also called '*sama*' due to its height.

In the Qur'an the word '*sama*' is used in various senses.

1. The bluish canopy (sky) that we see as the farthest limit of our sight is referred to as '*sama*' in the Qur'an.

"Who has made the earth a resting place for you and the *sama* (heaven) a canopy, and (who) sent down water from the *sama* (clouds) " (Qur'an 2:22)

2. It also signifies something that is above another thing. It is the higher or highest, upper or upper-most part of any thing. "Essentially it is the upper part of the *uniyah* in contradistinction to the earth."¹

"(I call to witness) the heaven webbed-with-tracks." (51:7)

3. It is also used as a metonym for the celestial bodies i.e. stars, planets, galaxies etc., which move in their orbits as per Divine Law:

"Are you not aware that it is Allah who has made subservient to you all that is on earth, and the ships that sail through the sea at His behest ... and (that it is He who) holds the celestial bodies in their orbits so that they may not fall upon the earth otherwise than by His leave?" (Qur'an 22:65)

4. It also denotes roof or ceiling:

"He who thinks that Allah will not help him (His Messenger) in this world and the next let him stretch out a rope, to the ceiling and cut (himself) off then let him see whether his plans will remove that which enrages (him)" (Qur'an 22:15)

5. '*Sama*' also denotes cloud. Its significance as cloud is of very frequent occurrence:

"Who has made the earth a couch for you and the heaven a canopy and (who) sends down water from the '*sama*' (clouds)" (Qur'an 2:22)

"And We opened up the flood gates of the (*sama*) sky, with water pouring down (in currents)." (Qur'an 54:11)

In both the above *ayaat* '*sama*' clearly refers to clouds.

6. '*Sama*' also denotes rain or water:

"..... and showered abundant rain on them and made rivers lap at their

feet" (Qur'an 6:6)

In the Qur'an '*sama*' is mostly used in its plural form i.e. '*samawat*', to describe the cosmic space in which the heavenly bodies pursue their courses.

29. *Qawwamun* (Qur'an 4:34)

From this *ayah* it is generally surmised that men stand above women and that they are superior to women, which is perhaps not correct. In this *ayah* the key word is *qawwamun*, which is plural of '*qawwam*' and it is derived from the root '*qama*' meaning to stand (erect). '*Qawwam*' is a person who, due to his engagement in arranging or managing certain affairs is not able to sit or rest, and is continuously on his feet. According to *Tajul Aroos*, '*qawwamun*' means one who procures the means of subsistence i.e. one who is a bread winner.

According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali, '*qawwam*' is "one who stands firm in another's business. Protects his interest and looks after his affairs."¹ According to Syed Abul A'la Maududi "*Qawwam* or *Qayyim* is a person responsible for administering or supervising the affairs of either an individual or an organization for protecting and safeguarding them and taking care of their needs."²

The word '*qawwameen*' which is yet another form of plural of '*qawwam*' is used in *ayah* 135 of the same *Surah*. In this *ayah* the word is used in imperative form. It is generally translated as stand out firmly.

In the *ayah* in question, the word '*qawwamun*' is most appropriate to indicate the role of man in relation to woman. As the woman has to devote continued attention to the care of children, the duty of providing her (and the children) with the means of subsistence, obviously, falls on man. This is nothing but division of labor. This means that by nature men have been endowed with the ability of attending on women; they are '*qawwamun*' (attendants), to watch all the requirements of women, such as provision of shelter, food, [clothing](#) and all other necessities of life.

The Qur'an has merely stated a universal truth: Men as '*qawwamun*' administer the reasonable and natural requirements of women. They support women. They are in charge of women, safeguarding them and taking charge of their needs. Nowhere '*qawwam*' refer to 'authority' of men over women. No authentic grounds exist for the distortion and mis-appropriation of the word '*qawwam*'.

There is no room to draw the conclusion that men because of their role in life are in any way superior to women. In this very *ayah*, it is mentioned that Allah has favoured (advantages, bounties) to some over others. This clearly shows that in some respects men have got advantages over women; and vice

versa. This is only due to the respective biological (physiological) differences of men and women. Advantages (*fazal*) in this *ayah* 4:34 as well as (Qur'an 62:10), though used for other favours also, is particularly used in socio-economic sense.

On the authority of this *ayah* it is generally claimed that man excels woman. The purport of the *ayah* is that, one excels the other in certain respects, and is surpassed by the other in other respects. Man is superior to woman in some abilities but inferior to her in others. He surpasses for example in physical strength but she excels him in teaching and in linguistic abilities. As regards the rights are concerned he Qur'an treats man and woman as equal in all respects:

"Woman's rights are to be respected as much as man's. Women have rights against men and men have rights against them (women)". (Qur'an 2:228).

The relationship between husband and wife, according to Qur'an, has to be closer and reciprocal:

"They are raiment for you and you are raiment for them". (Qur'an 2:187).

It clearly implies that once a woman is no longer dependent on man for her economic needs, she would be independent and men will have no advantage over such women from the socio-economic point of view. In other words, if a woman has a capacity to earn and can find time for it, she is free to do so. Whatever she earns belongs to her:

"What man earns will be his and whatever woman earns will belong to her." (Qur'an 4:32)

The Qur'an has completely changed man's attitude towards women and has given an honorable status to women and has treated them as human beings having certain rights such as the right to own property, right to succession etc. It has placed the relation between man and woman on a basis of equality, exalting neither one over the other. Mankind will attain human status only when man and woman are treated on equal terms as human beings and not with reference to sex distinction.

This bold declaration of the Qur'an is a departure from the ancient and medieval concept that women are not only inferior to men, they are not even human beings. They have no soul. Women were treated as a commodity. All sorts of ill-treatment and torture were inflicted upon them. Such ideas have been in vogue for centuries.

The popular interpretation of the word '*qawwamun*' is nothing but a remnant of the age-old prejudices against women.

30. *Qaba Qausain*

The significant word *Qaba Qausain* literally means 'one cord of two bows.' It is said about the Divine inspiration (the Qur'an):

"It is naught but inspiration sent down to him; he was taught by one mighty in power endued with wisdom for he appeared while he was in the highest horizon; then he approached and came closer, and was at a distance of but 'one cord of two bows' or even nearer." (Qur'an 53:4 to 9)

The exegetes widely differ as to the identity of 'one endued with wisdom' and who 'appeared in the highest horizon.' A majority of the exegetes is of the opinion that it is referred to the Angel *Jibril*, through whom the Divine revelations were conveyed to the Prophets. Others say it refers to the Supreme being, the mighty in power by whom the Prophet was taught. (*ayah* 5) The eminent exegete Ibne Aseer is of the opinion that the mention of closeness is not the closeness of Angel *Jibril* with the Prophet but the mention is of closeness of the Prophet with Allah.

Regarding the interpretation of the word *Qaba Qausain* the exegetes are of different views:

- i) Some have computed the distance as two bow shots (counting 100 to 150 yards to a bow-shot) which is a clear visible distance.
- ii) Others have computed the distance as about two yards taking the distance as of two bows.
- iii) Yet others have interpreted *Qaba Qausain* as two drawn bows with their cords touching, making a complete circle of union. This interpretation has computed the distance as nil.

It is interesting to note that all the interpretation (whether between the Angel *Jibril* and the Prophet or the Supreme Being and the Prophet) considered the close proximity of Allah in physical terms which appeared to be very strange in relation to the Supreme Being or to *Jibril*.

The nearness of Allah is mentioned in the Qur'an in the following words:

"For We are nearer to him than his jugular vein" (Qur'an 16:50).

Qaba Qausain in fact, refers to an ancient ceremony! *Khifaji*¹ also subscribes to this view. It may be understood that there are traditional ceremonies in ancient tribal cultures through which sentiments are expressed, and filial ties are established. One of such oldest ceremonies of mankind prevalent in Africa, even today, is mentioned by Alex Haley in his renowned book 'Roots.' Some one special is encircled and while going round in anti-

clock wise circles, each woman thrusts her baby with a gesture saying 'take it.' Then she snatches away her baby and another woman thrusts her baby, then another, then another. In this way they tell: "through this flesh, which is us, we are you and you are us.'

There was a similar ceremony prevalent among Arabs: When two warring tribes decided to end hostilities, two persons (one from each tribe) stood close to and facing each other with right foot forward, so that their both shoulders touched each other, so did their left cheeks. They threw their bows on the ground and then lifted them holding their cords together (to consecrate the act as a binding vow that thence onward they will not lift their weapons of war against one another, but together against a common foe).

The translation of *ayah* 53:9 thus will be: "then closed up like a cord of two bows (signifying permanent attachment between two tribes, hitherto hostile in the manner of the Arab custom); and indeed more closely.

The Qur'an has borrowed from a prevalent custom, the depth of the sense of closeness after the end of belligerency. This closeness has been applied to the closeness of the Prophet with the divine order, after mankind going astray for a long time.

The idea of God and man and their mutual relationship is a major theme in almost all religions.

In Christianity, the purpose of Christ's mission in life was the reconciliation of God and man. Views of the nature of this reconciliation differ as widely as views of man's sins, guilt and inability to rectify his position before God.

In Judaism there was a belief of covenant (*misah*) between God and man.

The Qur'an mentions the earlier covenants mentioned by the people of the Book, and argues that they have not kept up their respective covenants. Thus according to the argument of the Qur'an, man was still at war with the Divine power. After the advent of the Prophet, the belligerency ended. Thence onward, the injunctions of the Prophet, are identical with the injunctions of Allah. The Qur'an, therefore, enjoins to obey the orders of Allah and of the Prophet (simultaneously) (Qur'an 3:32, 4:59, 8:20, etc).

The word *Qaba Qausain* is not indicative of extreme physical nearness. It shows that the entire mission of the prophet was identical with the Divine will.

In this case, the 'one mighty in power' in *Ayah* 5 would be not the Angel Jibril but the Supreme Being who Himself taught the Prophet.

31. *Qaza wa Qadr*

A general perception among the Muslims is that whatever has occurred or shall come pass in the world proceeds entirely from the will of Allah. It is generally believed that every occurrence whether good or bad has been predetermined and inscribed on a tablet or written on the forehead of the individual. The popular doctrine regarding predestination (determinism) contrary to the Qur'anic concept was introduced and the debate matured by 71 H / 690 AD. Later it was included as one of the fundamentals of Islamic faith, assumed a theological status and was finally accepted as a dogma.

According to this dogma the Qur'anic terms *qaza* and *qadr* are erroneously used for fate or predestination. *Qaza wa qadr* are spoken of together to indicate the concept of predetermination.

The meaningless discussions started when the Muslims were confronted with the adherents of decaying Zoroastrian religion after the conquest of Iran in 23 H / 644 A.D. Thus the age-long controversy which was faced by other religions was introduced into the young Muslim community, mostly by *ajami* (non-Arab) scholars. These debates were almost on the same lines as were prevalent between Christian theologians during the middle ages.

In support of the concept of predestination sayings were fabricated and attributed to the Prophet. Within about thirty years after the demise of the Prophet a gradual process of misinterpreting the terms *qaza* and *qadr* started. Different sects among the Muslims such as *Jabariya*, *mutazila* and *ash'ariya* appeared with divergent views on the subject.

According to the Qur'an a Man, in a given situation, is free to choose between alternatives. "the Qur'an firmly holds Man to be a responsible free agent doing and producing his own works at will". In fact, *taqdeer* from the root *qadra* is spoken of in the Qur'an as a Divine measure and a universal law of Allah prevailing in the universe.

Qaza

Qaza literally means to decree, to determine, to decide or to pass sentence. *Qaza* is the decision. It is a (pre) judgement that the consequent of good actions will be good and vice versa etc.

Qadr

Qadr means to measure (to an exact nicety), to determine the value, or to devise the measure. It signifies the creating the things subject to certain laws. The meaning of the word *qadarin* will be fully understood from the following *ayaat*.

"Glorify the name of the Lord, the Most High, who creates, then makes complete, and who makes things according to measure (*qadara* from *taqdir*) and grants guidance." (Qur'an 87:1-3)

"Surely We have created everything according to a measure (*qadr*)". (Qur'an 54:49)

"(It is Allah) who created everything then ordained for it a measure (*taqdir*)" (Qur'an 25:2)

"And the sun runs on to a term appointed for it, and that is the law (*taqdir*) of the Mighty, the knowing and as for the moon. We have ordained (*qaddarna* from *taqdir*) for its stages." (Qur'an 36:38,39).

Though the Qur'an has used the words '*qadr*' or '*taqdir*' these words by no means carry the significance of predestination of good and evil for Man. *Qadr* or '*taqdir*' the Holy Book speaks of is of a general nature a law prevailing in the universe-a limitation under which the whole of creation is moving onward. In the Qur'an there is no mention at all that '*qadr*' should be accepted as the bases of *iman*.

"And we send down water from the clouds according to measure (*qadr*)

"And Allah has appointed a measure (*yuqaddira* from *taqdir*), of the night and day". (Qur'an 23:18 43:11).

The law according to which foods, resources and other things are provided on the earth is also called a '*taqdir*' of Allah, and so, also, the law according to which night and day follow each other. "And He made in it mountains above its surface, and He blessed therein and made (*qaddaran*) therein its food". (Qur'an 41:10).

"And there is not a thing but with us are the treasures of it, and We do not sent it down but in a known measure (*qadr*)" (Qur'an 51:21)

Nowhere in the Qur'an '*qadr*' is used to indicate predestination. Belief in '*qadr*' does not mean belief in predestination. The Qur'an neither mentions '*qadr*' among the fundamentals of Islam nor ever speaks of it as an article of faith.

Allah is the Lord of all domains of existence (*Rabbul-al'lemin* 1:2) He has created innumerable worlds - worlds which are beyond human comprehension. Allah being the best of the creators (*Ahsanul Khaliqin* 223:14) has created each domain on different pattern and specific laws govern each domain. Man being part of the physical universe of three dimensions, is governed by the limitations imposed by the laws governing our state of existence.

According to lexicologists, '*taqdir*' in the language of the Holy Qur'an, is a universal law of God, operating as much in the case of Man as in the most of creatures: a law extending to the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth. This universal law is fully explained in two short verses". (Qur'an 87.2 and 3)

Though Man is included in the creation, and his life is also governed by a Divine measure (*taqdir*) yet he is separately spoken of as having a '*taqdir*' similar to the law of growth and development in other things:

"Of what things did He create him? Of a small life-germ He created

him then He made him according to a measure (*qaddra-hu*)" (Qur'an 80:18,19).

No doubt Allah is the creator of the entire universe including Man, but this does not mean that He is the creator of the actions of man.

Only on two occasions the Quran has used a derivative of *qadar* which apparently appears to indicate the fate or destiny of a person:

1. "We ordained (*qaddana*) that the (wife of Prophet Nuh) shall be of those who remain behind" (Qur'an 15:60).
2. "Whom (the wife of Prophet Nuh) We willed to be among those that stayed behind" (Qur'an 27:57).

Even in the above *ayaat*, it is not meant that Allah had predestined that wife of Prophet Nuh should be a doer of evil. It only mentions an ordinance (*qaza*), which holds good in the case of all evil doers that they should suffer the evil consequences of what they have done. The wife of Prophet Nuh was not faithful, therefore, when the Divine punishment overtook the evil doers she was ordained (strictly according to the ordinance) to be with them.

Difference between 'qaza' and "qadr"

The word '*qaza*' is generally associated with '*qadr*'. In common parlance '*qaza wa qadr*' of Allah are spoken of together to indicate the concept of predestination. *Qadr* is the measure while '*qaza*' is the decision or bringing of it into action. *Qaza* is only the ordering of a thing to come to pass, while '*qadr*' signifies the creating of things subject to certain laws. '*Taqdir*' is never mentioned as one of the fundamentals of religion like faith in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Apostles and in life after death.

To say both good and evil are created by Allah is not an article of faith in Islam. This fact is only mentioned to counter the belief of some religions which preach that there are two supreme beings and that good is created by one and evil by the other, Allah, no doubt, is the first and the ultimate cause of all things but this does not mean that He is the Creator of actions of man. Allah has created Man and endowed him with the decision to choose how to act. Man is endowed with discretion and a free-will:

"The truth is from our Lord, so let him who pleases accept (it) and let him who pleases reject (it)" (Qur'an 18:29).

Allah has also created the conditions in which Man has to live and act. Allah has imposed certain limitations upon him. As Man can exercise his discretion and has a free will in doing a thing or not doing it, he alone is responsible for his actions and is made to face the consequences. If it is accepted that Allah will condemn a person to the fire of Hell according to predestination, it amounts to holding Allah responsible for such arbitrary condemnation. In fact, it is a Satanic act to hold Allah responsible for one's misdeeds.

There are some *ayaat* in the Quran which apparently appear to favour the doctrine of predestination.

“And no human being can die save by God’s leave, at a fixed term”
(Qur’an 3:145)

In this *ayah* there is no reference of predestination. These words refer to the Prophet that in fulfillment of Allah’s promise and as a result of his struggle, he will succeed in his mission. This was an assurance to the Muslims that the time of the Prophets death has not yet come. The *ayah* also points to the special Divine protection of the Prophet due to which he escaped from death under critical circumstances at the battle of Uhud.

2. “Say nothing will afflict us save what Allah has ordained for us – “
(Qur’an 9:51)

According to the Qur’an prosperity or adversity befalls a community according to its deeds. Allah’s decree is passed against a group when it refuses to acknowledge truth and continues to indulge in evil deeds. After creating Man with free will Allah is watchful every moment and passes decrees after the deeds performed there is no indication of predestination in this *ayah* also.

3. “(Prophet Nuh said) For, my advice will not benefit you – much as I desire to given you good advice – if it be Allah ‘s will that you shall remain lost in grievous error_” (Qur’an 11:34)

According to some commentators the expression which literally means “that He shall cause you to err” is to be understood as that He shall punish you for your sins ”or “that He shall destroy you” Even if literal meaning is accepted the explanation will be that if a person is persistent in his sins, as per the decree (*qaza*) of Allah he shall remain lost in error, the sinner alone will be responsible for choosing the wrong path. This view is also supported by Zamakhshari.

4. “ --- Allah lets go astray those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases –” (Qur’an 14:4)

The following rendering of the above *ayah* is also synthetically justified.
“ Allah lets go astray him that wills (to go astray) and guides him that wills (to be guided). Man going astray is a consequence of his own attitude and inclination and not a result of an arbitrary ‘predestination’ in the popular sense. Allah does not cause anyone to go astray except the one who as per his free choice chooses a wrong path. Zamakhshari also supports this view.

5. “And We have fastened to every man’s neck his augury (ledger of deeds) and We will bring forth to him on the Resurrection Day a Book which he will find wide open”. (Qur’an 17:13)

The misinterpretation of this *ayah* has led some to conclude that every deed which a man performs during his life time is predetermined and

fastened to his neck. In fact the *ayah* reveals the principle that every action produces an effect which is made to cling to a man and that this every effect will be met with on the Resurrection Day in the form of a wide open book.

Some scholars have construed that *ayah* 16 of *Surah Al-Isra* supports the doctrine of predestination. However, if *ayaat* 15 and 16 are read together the meaning becomes clear:

“Whoever chooses to follow the right path follows it for his own good; and whoever goes astray to his own hurt; and no bearer of burden shall be made to bear another’s burden. Moreover, We would never chastise (any community for the wrong they do) ere We have sent an apostle (to them)”. (Qur’an 17:15).

6. “But when (this has been done, and) it is Our will to destroy a community We convey Our last warning to those of its people who have lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures, and (if) they (continue to) act sinfully, the sentence (of doom) passed on the community takes effect, and We break it to smithereens”. (Qur’an 17: 16).

It is very clear that Man and communities are entirely responsible for their actions. Rise and fall of nations takes place as per Divine law. Allah punishes men and communities with full justice as per predetermined law (*qaza*) and not arbitrarily.

7. “And Allah has created you and what you make”. (Qur’an 37:96)

This *ayah* is often interpreted to mean that Allah has created Man’s action and that it lends support to the doctrine of predestination.

The Arabic word ‘*tamalun*’ is used in the *ayah* 37:96 meaning ‘doing’ as well as ‘making’. Thus it is concluded that Allah is the creator of the actions of human beings. Since the actions of Man are good as well as evil, it is surmised that Allah is the creator of the good and the evil deeds of man. If we see the context of the *ayah* (from verses 91 to 96) the real meaning of the word ‘*tamalun*’ will become quite clear, Prophet Ibrahim broke the idols (*ayah* 91 to 93). When the people saw their idols broken they advanced towards him (*ayah* 94). Prophet Ibrahim entered into argument with the idol worshipers (*ayaat* 95 and 96). It was during these arguments that Prophet Ibrahim cornered the idol worshippers, saying:

“What do you worship, what you hew out? And Allah has created you and what you make”. (Qur’an 37:95 and 96).

It is very clear that ‘*tamalun*’ here has to be rendered as ‘what you make’. By no stretch of imagination can it be rendered as “what you do” ‘*Tamalun*’ clearly refers to the idols which the idol worshipers made and the argument is very clear that what is hewed out by Man’s own hands could not be the object of worship. Allah alone is the creator of Man as well as the idols

which are carved by Man.

8. “No calamity can ever befall the earth, or your own selves, unless it be (laid down) in Our decree before We bring it into being: verily, all this is easy for Allah”. (Qur’an 57:22)

Here again the decree of Allah refers not to a predetermined decree but to a decree which is passed according to the deeds of Man.

In the *ayah* 64:11 also, almost the same words are used, and it is further classified that “if anyone believes in Allah, (Allah) guides his heart (aright) for Allah knows all things.

9. “You will not take a straight path except as Allah wills. For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom” (Qur’an 76:30).

The preceding *ayah* – whoever, then so wills, may unto his sustainer find a way” (Qur’an 76-29) apparently supports the doctrine of free will. The apparent contradiction can however be resolved by *ayah* 3 of the same *surah*.

“We have shown him the way (and it rests with him to prove himself) either grateful or ungrateful” (Qur’an 76:3).

According to the Qur’an there is recompense in this world and in the Hereafter, for every good or bad deed of Man:

Accountability presupposes that Man is endowed with free will within human limitations. The denial of the ability to choose a course of action would seem to negate the possibility of moral judgment. A man without moral judgment is not responsible for his actions. Man being the only disorderly element in nature, an act of free will on the part of man, is an uncaused act outside the cause and effect. Superficially it appears that the presence of an uncaused act negates rational Divine order and makes the universe seem irrational. In fact it is not so. Allah created Man and in His Divine wisdom endowed Man with free will. While doing so He provided conditions and environment according to Divine estimate and judgment, ‘*qadr*’.

The Qur’an has declared that Allah has given license to human beings to choose a course of action for themselves. Thus according to the Qur’an we can make independent decisions for ourselves. This is however, subject to certain restraints. Man’s ability to determine his actions is restricted. These limitations are but human due to the Divine *qadr* with which Man is created i.e. nature of Man’s birth. It can thus be said that human action is not willed freely, but it is rather the result of such influences as passions, desires, physical conditions, and external circumstances, to certain extent beyond the control of the individual.

Both extremes, viz., 'cast-iron determinism' and an idea of 'chaotic free will' are therefore, negated by the Qur'an.

32. *Kiraman Katibeen* (Qur'an 32:11 & 50:17)

Some exegetes are of the opinion that in the above two *ayaat* reference is to the guardian angels who record every individual's deeds. They are of the opinion that the one sitting on the right side records the good deeds, and the other, on the left, records the bad deeds.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali for example, has rendered *ayah* 17 of surah 50 as follows:

"Behold! two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn (and note them) one sitting on the right and one on the left."

The Phrase '*yatalaqqal-mutalaqqiyan*' in *ayah* 50:17 can be rendered in two ways:

- i) "The two that are meant to receive, do receive,
- ii) The two that aim at meeting each other, do meet,"

Most of the classical exegetes adopt the former sense and interpret the *ayah* as follows:

"The two angels that are charged with recording man's doing, do record them, sitting on his right and on his left."

The preceeding *ayah* is as follows:

"It was We who created man, and We know what doubts arise in his inner most self; for We are closer to him than his jugular vein." (Qur'an 50:16).

The second of the renderings of '*Yatalaqqal-mutalaqqiyan*' corresponds better with the preceeding *ayah* 50:16 which speaks of what man's inner most self 'whispers within him', i.e., voices of his sub conscious desires. Muhammad Asad has rendered this *ayah* 50:17 as follows:

"(And so), whenever the two demands (of his nature) come face to face,

contending from the right and from the left.”

“The two that aim at meeting man’s nature: his primal, instinctive urges and desires, both sensual and non-sensual, (all of them comprise in the modern psychological term ‘libido’) on the one side, and his reason, both intuitive and reflective, on the other. The ‘sitting (qaeed) on the right and on the left’ is, to my mind, a metaphor for the conflicting nature of these dual forces which strive for predominance within every human being: hence, my rendering of ‘qaeed’ as ‘contending’.”¹

“The ‘watchful force’ (*hafiz*) set over every human being is his own conscience, which ‘records’ all his motives and actions in his sub-conscious mind. Since it is the most precious element in man’s psyche, it is described in *inayah* 11 as noble.”²

33. *Kun Fayakun*

These words have been used eight times in the Qur’an¹. The English rendering of the words ‘*kun fayakun*’ will be: ‘Be and there it is’.

The process of creation of the universe or of man was gradual, in accordance with the law of cause and effect, and it was not sudden. From the words ‘*Kun fayakun*’ it should not be understood that the creation was brought into reality within the twinkling of the eye. Allah does not create anything whether living or without life in its perfect condition all at once. Allah has so devised the law of evolution that it permeates in the entire physical universe. Allah creates a thing in a series of stages until it takes its final shape, or the final stage of perfection. To create a thing from a state of non-existence to a state of perfect existence without any intermediary stage, is no doubt, within the power of the Almighty but it will not be consistent with His attribute of ‘*rububiyah*’, which denotes that Allah as ‘*rab*’ develops a thing from stage to stage in order that it might attain its full stature of perfection. To suppose that Allah has created the universe all at once will be in contradiction to the law of Allah. The laws of Allah are immutable. Allah declares:

“And you will not find a change in Our laws” (Qur’an 17:77. See also 33:62 and 35:43).

It can be surmised that immediately with the command ‘*kun*’, a whole process of evolution started which completed, (or may be it is still in the process of completion), in the course of time.

In fact the phrase ‘*kun fayakun*’ refers to two independent stages. *Kun* as ‘*amr*’ (command) stands for premeasurement, and ‘*yakun*’ stands for actual creation. *Kun* is merely the command and it is unrelated to time. The next stage, no doubt, commences in the twinkling of an eye:

“Surely We have created everything according to measure and Our command, is but one as the twinkling of an eye.” (Qur’an 54:49,50)

There is no interposition of time between the will of Allah and the actual creation. With the command of Allah, the process of creation starts to which the term '*khalafa*' is to be applied:

“Surely your Lord is Allah who created (*khalafa*) the heavens and the earth in six days (periods of time)” (Qur’an 7:54)

Similarly in *ayaat* 10:3, and 11:7, six stages of creation are mentioned.

“Thus, with '*kun*' the process of creation starts at once, but it does not mean that it is completed immediately. The Qur’an speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six periods or stages. Even if the word '*yaum*' is translated as day, it cannot be understood as immediate.”¹

According to *Tafseer-Kabeer*:

“*Kun* does not mean either an address or a command to any one. If it is for non existent objects, it is an impossibility; and if existent objects are told to come into existence, it is meaningless. The real purpose of '*kun*' is to show the power of Allah and to mean that the entire universe came into existence in accordance with His power and will.”¹

34. *Lahwal hadith*

The *ayah* can be rendered as follows:

“But there are among men, those who entertain frivolous events (playful discourse), without the knowledge (or implications) to mislead (men) from the path of Allah, and turn it to ridicule: for such there will be a humiliating penalty” (Qur’an 31:6).

The Qur’an allows all human activity with the only condition that they should be within limits; one should not transgress the limits of decency. There is a very subtle difference between commendable activities and those which are condemned. The same activity can be allowed if it is within reasonable limits and will be disallowed if the limits of decency are exceeded. Islam advocates the middle or the balanced path. The main criterion for judging any activity is the intention behind it. For example all human activities associated with food, clothing, shelter etc. are inevitable to sustain life. Similarly, man is endowed with aesthetic taste, creativity, and has been provided with not only the capability of learning, but also a keen desire to acquire knowledge. All the activities related to these faculties are necessary and healthy. Islam therefore approves of them.

There are certain deeds which are a source of entertainment and look alluring to men. Such deeds distract the mind from healthy pursuits. Poetry and music excite baser emotions. As such, the Qur'an condemns the poets as "those who stray in evil and follow the evil ones" (Qur'an 26:224). Story telling is also condemned in the Qur'an, and it is compared to talking 'non-sense' of the un-believers (Qur'an 23:67). These and other *ayaat* of the Qur'an give clear clues as to which entertainments are undesirable. The Qur'an has used a comprehensive term 'lahwal-hadith' for all such pursuits, such as singing, cinema, radio, television, video etc. It should however be noted that the above mentioned instruments of modern media are, by themselves, not undesirable. They can be excellent instruments for diffusing knowledge and for entertainment within reasonable limits. Their use today exceeds boundaries of decency and they can be safely regarded as '*munkar*' (which is commonly accepted as 'repugnant and horrible').

Taweel ul-Ahadith

"Your Lord will choose you (O Yousuf) and teach you the interpretation of events. (*Taweel Ul-Ahadith*)" (Qur'an 12:16)

How one reacts to the events that will occur in day-to-day life is important. A man of faith accepts disasters with firm conviction that they are from Allah as a test. He exhibits perseverance and adopts an attitude of resignation in adverse circumstances as opposed to murmuring or complaining. He submits to the will of Allah. Such healthy reaction, as per the Qur'anic term, is '*sabr*'.

Similarly, if a man of faith gets worldly benefits, he receives them as a favor from the Almighty and expresses his gratitude to Allah. He regards these material benefits as an opportunity for serving suffering humanity.

Not only to the events of day-to-day life, but to the historical events and past experiences of people and nations, the attitude of a man of faith is similar. He seeks edifying material which leads to Allah.

Prophet Yusuf was not only endowed with the faculty of interpreting dreams, but also interpreting events, past and present. In fact all the prophets are endowed with such faculty. They in turn, explain the correct interpretation to their followers.

35. '*Lawh Mahfuz*' (Qur'an 85:21)

The word '*lawh*' literally means a plank as in *ayah* 54:13 and a tablet for writing; '*mahfuz*' means that which is guarded.

The word '*lawh*' in its plural form '*alwah*' is used in connection with the books of Prophet Musa:

“And We ordained for him in the tablets (*alwah*) admonition of every kind and clear explanation of all things.” (Qur’an 7:145)

The expression ‘*lawh mahfuz*’ occurs but once in the Qur’an:

“Nay! It is a glorious Qur’an in the guarded tablet” (Qur’an 85:21).

It is generally believed that ‘*luah mahfuz*’ contains all the revelations of Allah in writing.

There is however, no mention in the Qur’an of a ‘*lawh mahfuz*’ in which all the decrees of Allah are written. It may be noted that Allah’s writing materials are not of the same nature as those of man. Allah does not require a tablet to write and preserve His decrees. Though the Qur’an ascribes to Allah the faculties of speaking, seeing, hearing etc., yet the nature of these faculties are completely different from those of mortal beings. Allah does not stand in need of the means for the doing an act, which human beings need. To suppose ‘*lawh*’ as a physical tablet betrays lack of correct understanding of the Divine Powers. *Luwl* or *lawh mahfuz* are but to be taken as metonyms.

The ‘*alwah*’ of Prophet Musa and ‘*lawh mahfuz*’ mentioned in the Qur’an are the same. In the case of the Qur’an, the *luah* is stated to be ‘*mahfuz*’ or guarded. The significance is that no alteration shall find a way into the text of the Qur’an. For this the Quran gives the following explanation.

“Surely We have revealed the Reminder (The Qur’an) and We will surely be its guardian” (Qur’an 15.9)

The meaning conveyed in ‘*lawh mahfuz*’ is therefore exactly the same as is stated about the protection of the text of the Qur’an.

36. Mann and Salwa (Qur’an 2:57, 7:160 and 20:80)

The word ‘*mann*’ is derived from the root ‘*manna*’ meaning to show grace, to bestow favor, etc.

The word ‘*salwa*’ is derived from the root ‘*salwa*’ meaning to give consolation, solace or comfort.

The words ‘*mann*’ and ‘*salwa*’ have been used in the following three *ayaat*:

(1) “And We caused the clouds to comfort you with their shade, and sent down unto you ‘*mann*’ and ‘*salwa*’, (saying) partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance.” (Qur’an 2:57)

(2) “. . . . and We caused the clouds to comfort them with their shade, and We sent down unto them ‘*mann*’ and ‘*salwa*’, (saying) ‘partake of the good

things which We have provided for you as sustenance'" (Qur'an 7:160)

(3) " and repeatedly sent down 'mann' and 'salwa' unto you." (Qur'an 20:80) "(saying) 'partake of the good things which We have provided for your sustenance" (Qur'an 20:81).

The word 'mann' in the above three *ayaat* as well as in *ayaat* 3:164, 4:94, 14:11, 28:5, 37:114, 38:39, 47:4, 49:17 and 74:6 denotes favor, grace, gift reward etc.

In the following single *ayah*, the word 'mann' in different derivatives has been used thrice:

"They impress on you as a favour that they have accepted Islam. Say deem not your surrender a favour unto me: Nay Allah has conferred a favour upon you in as much He has guided you to believe, if you are sincere". (Qur'an 49:17)

The word 'salwa' is used along with the word 'mann' in the three *ayaat* 2:57, 7:160, 20:80 as stated above. It has not been used separately. No other derivative of the root 'salwa' is used in the Quran.

All the exegetes and translators have rendered the word 'mann' in the above nine *ayaat* as gift, favour, etc. There is no question of any ambiguity or doubt as far as the literal meaning of 'mann' is concerned. The difficulty arises only due to the fact that 'mann' in the Bible refers to some substance of plant origin (Exodus). 'Mann' is also mentioned as a starchy or proteinous material (Book of Numbers). The word 'salwa' is not used in the Bible. "According to the Bible 'mann' was the divinely supplied food. It was the substance miraculously supplied to the Israelites during their progress through the wilderness".¹ Under the Biblical influence some of the exegetes of the Qur'an have however, rendered the word 'mann' as a sweet substance and 'salwa' as quails in *ayaat* 2:57, 7:160 and 20:80. It amounts to desperate revolt against evidence to limit the bounties and favors of Allah by trying in vain to ascribe a particular identification. The wider concept of 'mann' (bounty) and 'salwa' (solace) of the Quran does not exclude the possibility of identifying them as the 'sweetish liquid' and 'quails', which along with several other materials, were provided in the desert to the wandering Israelites. There is however no unanimity among the exegetes regarding the identification of 'mann'. According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "the actual manna found to this day in the Sinai region is a gummy saccharine secretion found on a species of Tamerisk. It is produced by the puncture of a species of insect like the cochineal just as lac is produced of the puncture of the lac insect on certain trees in India"¹. In *Lughatul Qur'an* 'mann' is described as something like the honey dew found deposited on the leaves of certain trees and collected early in the morning. Some have described 'mann' as a plant product without identifying the actual plant source.² Some of them have identified

the 'mann' as 'turanjabin'.

It is very clear from all the *ayaat* of the Qur'an that 'mann' refers to Divine favor or bounty.

According to 'Tafseer ibn Kasir', 'mann' denotes every bounty by which Allah had obliged the exiled tribes of Bani Israel, for example food, drink, etc., which they received without effort. "Manna most probably covers all kinds of food and drink that He provided them with or anything that did not require working for nor exerting any effort to obtain". ³

Similarly 'salwa' literally denotes a thing which provides satisfaction and consolation. Things which give consolation can also be termed as 'salwa', by implication.

According to Raghīb Isfahani 'mann and salwa' both denote the bounty of Allah which was provided to Bani Israel and both are basically one.¹

The word 'anzalna alaihum' used in all three *ayaat* (2:57, 7:160, 20:80) is suggestive. The word 'anzalna' or 'We bestowed' is used mostly for sending down or bestowing intangible objects such as Divine message, pestilence, tranquillity, solace etc. It is used for (rain) water (Qur'an 29:63, 13:17, 39:21 etc.). As in all these *ayaat* (rain) water is used figuratively for Allah's favors. Similarly the word 'anzalna' is used in respect of iron. (Qur'an 57:25) in the shape of atmospheric dust from the outer space². Here, iron is not shown as a substance sent down from above. The reference is to the capacity of understanding and using iron which Allah bestowed upon man.

37. Mahjoor

This word is used only once in *ayah* 30 of Surah al *Furqan*. This *ayah* is usually rendered as follows:

And (On that Day) "(the apostle will say):

'O my sustainer! Behold, (some of) my people

have come to regard this Qur'an as something

that ought to be discarded".

Thus, the word *mahjoor* is usually rendered as forsaken, irrelevant or discarded.

The meaning of the Qur'anic word *mahjoor* is much more forceful than forsaken etc.,

A violent horse or camel whose neck and leg are tied together with a short rope to keep it under control is called *mahjoor*.

According to Raghīb the rope used to tie the foot of a camel thus being the cause of separating it from other camels, is called *hijar*. The camel which is tied with a rope (*hijar*) is called *mahjoor*.

According to the Hidayah Vol. III 5 the word *mahjoor* is used for a slave inhibited by the ruler from exercising any office or agency. ¹

The Prophet's complaint is the exact representation of the treatment meted out to the Qur'an today by keeping it under bondage of self created superstitions, narrow thinking and perverted beliefs.

According to this *ayah* on the day of judgement the Prophet will complain before Allah against the very those people who professed verbal allegiance to him and to the Qur'an but lost all real faith in the lofty Qur'anic message saying". O my sustainer! My people rendered this Qur'an as hogtied".

The eminent Qur'anic scholar Ahmed Ali has rendered this *ayah* as follows:

"The apostle will say: 'O my Lord! My people
had shackled the Qur'an head to foot".

Dr. Hashim Amir Ali has rendered this *ayah* as follows:

"The Messenger calls out in dire distress, 'O Lord my people have now crippled this discourse'".

38. Nazzala

The word '*nazzala*' is derived from the root '*nazala*' meaning to bestow, send down, or cause to descend.

Three different derivatives of the word '*nazala*' are used in one single *ayah*:

"And say: 'O My Lord! Cause me to alight '*anzilnii*' a blessed alighting '*munzalam*' and Thou art the best of those who can make (me) to alight '*munziliin*'". (Qur'an 23:29)

Here the root '*nazala*' is used in the sense of alighting or landing.

The verbal forms, '*anzala*', '*nazala*' etc. are mostly used for the revelation of the Qur'an: (Qur'an 2:185, 5:67, 12:2, 18:1, 20:2, 59:21, 97:1, etc.), and of the earlier scriptures (Qur'an 2:87, 2:136, 2:174, 2:213, 4:136 etc).

'*Nazzala*' implies bestowing from on high step by step. It indicates both gradualness and continuity in the process of Divine revelation.

Derivatives of the same root '*nazala*' are used in respect of the word '*sultan*' (authority of Divine writ) (Qur'an 2:40, 30:35, 53:23). Here the Qur'an questions the authority for associating gods with the Supreme Being. The word '*sultan*' is here used in the sense of Divine message, and hence the words '*ma anzalna*' and '*am anzalna*' are quite appropriate.

The same verbal forms '*anzala*' and '*nazala*' etc. are also frequently used for the sending down of water from the clouds above (Qur'an 2:22, 2:164, 6:99, 13:17, 14:32, 29:63, 39:21 etc.).

It is to be noted that the words '*nazzala*' and '*anzala*' in the above *ayaata* are not merely used due to the fact that the rain water comes down from high above gradually and continually, but mainly, because the rain water is the source of giving new life to the dead soils, all vegetation and of providing the food for the living beings etc. Rainwater is mostly used in the Qur'an as a symbol for benevolence. It is actually the benevolence of Allah which has been bestowed on the human beings (and all living creatures) through the rainwater. The words '*nazzala*' and '*anzala*' are used for this benevolence which is caused to descend in the form of rain.

Apart from the above benefits, the Qur'an has also used the rain water as a symbol for the beneficial message of the Prophet.

This word "is not applied only to the actual sending down of a (tangible) thing but also to making it accessible to men."¹

It is in this sense that the [clothes](#) (Qur'an 7:26), cattle (Qur'an 39:6), iron (Qur'an 57:25) are also spoken of in the Qur'an as being sent down for men.

In the above mentioned *ayaat*, '*anzala*' does not merely signify the sending down of a thing from above. In fact, Allah created in man the capacity of understanding and using these and many similar objects of nature. "'*Anzala*' is used in the sense of "revealed to man the use of certain things".²

As far as sending down of irons is concerned, one interesting factor deserves consideration: "The iron present in the earth the major portion of the core being composed of it, was sent down from outer space".³ the word *Fihī basun shaded* (in it is extreme strength/hardness) is suggestive: "The ultimate stellar ash is made up of iron. In iron atomic nuclei are packed as tightly as

possible Iron is the heaviest element that gets synthesized in a star by standard nuclear burning. It has the most stable nucleus. The energy required to synthesise iron is not available on earth, therefore the iron found in the earth must have been synthesized in outer space".¹ No doubt *nazala* with all its derivatives is used for sending down of intangible objects, its use is most apt for sending down the iron in the shape of atmospheric dust from the outer space.

The Qur'an has used the words '*anzala*' and '*nazzalna*' (We caused to descend) for providing '*mann*' (grace, favor etc.) and '*salwa*' (consolation, solace, comfort etc.). In fact the use of the words '*nazzala*' and '*anzala*' are suggestive that '*mann*' and '*salwa*' were not specifically honeydew, as mentioned in the Bible, or quails.

The word '*Rabbana anzil alaina*' (Our Lord! Send down to us) is used for '*ma'idah*' (Qur'an 5:114). *Ma'idah* is generally rendered as 'table spread with food', feast, repast etc. In fact the word '*anzil*' suggests that '*ma'idah*' means an ever recurring happiness or source of enjoyment. The eminent Qur'an scholar and commentator Baidawi subscribes to this view.

Derivatives of the same root have been used in respect to the word '*rizq*' (Qur'an 40:13, 10:59): "He it is who shows you His wonders (in nature) and sends down sustenance (*rizq*) for you from the sky: But none bethinks himself (thereof) except those who are wont to turn to Allah" (Qur'an 10:59).

The word " '*rizq*' connotes all that may be good and useful to man, be it of a physical nature (in the conventional sense of 'means of sustenance') or belonging to the realm of the mind (like reason, knowledge etc) or of the spirit (like faith, kindness, patience etc.). Thus it applies exclusively to positive, beneficial means of sustenance, and never to things or phenomenon which are morally reprehensible and/or physically or socially injurious."¹

The word '*anzala*' is used with reference to '*sakinata*' in *ayaat* 9:26, 9:40, 48:4, 48:18, 48:26. '*Sakinata*' means tranquillity and confidence which Allah sent down to His Prophets and the believers.

The Qur'an speaks of sending down hosts (army) from above, and has used the derivative of the root '*nazala*' (Qur'an 9:26, 36:28, 48:4 etc.). It is evident from the context that there is no question of Allah sending an army from above. It is the unseen forces which Allah bestows upon the believers during their struggle against the infidels.

The words '*tatanazzalu*' and '*tanazzalu*' are used in respect of '*malaika*' i.e. angels (Qur'an 41-30) and '*shayateen*' i.e. devils (Qur'an 26:221-223) respectively:

“(But) behold. as for those who say, ‘Our sustainer is Allah’, and steadfastly pursue the right way that upon them do angels often descend (saying): ‘fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tidings of that Paradise which has been promised to you’.” (Qur’an 41:30)

“(And shall I tell you upon whom it is that those evil spirits descend?” (Qur’an 26:221)

“They descend upon all habitual liars (self-deceivers).” (Qur’an 26:222)

“who readily lend ears to every falsehood, and most of whom lie to others as well.” (Qur’an 26:223)

In the above *ayaat* it is not actually the descent of the ‘*malaika*’ or the ‘*shayateen*’ which is stressed upon. It is the bounty of Allah in the shape of Paradise which is promised to those who steadfastly pursue the right path. Similarly, those who habitually indulge themselves in calumniating, slandering, and take keen interest in rumour mongering are trapped into self-deceit, and other psychological complexes. These reactions are chastisement of Allah.

It is a part of prophetic mission to convey good tidings (*basharah*) to the righteous and to warn (*nazarah*) the evil-doers of the consequences of their ways. The Qur’an has presented ‘*basharah*’ and *nazarah* in various forms (*tasreef*) as one of its stylistic devices.

The descending of the ‘*malaika*’ and ‘*shayateen*’ denotes the bestowing of the benevolence of Allah and inflicting punishment.

Thus it is clear that derivatives of the root ‘*nazala*’ are used in respect of intangible objects such as messages, authority, *sakinat* (tranquillity, confidence) from Allah. Even when the derivatives of the root ‘*nazzala*’ are used in respect of seemingly tangible objects such as ‘*ma’idah*’ (repast) iron, clothes, cattle, ‘*mann*’, ‘*salwa*’, ‘*rizq*’ (sustenance) army, etc., the reference is to the bounties of Allah which they represent or to the knowledge of their use which Allah has bestowed upon man.

39. *Nahi annil Munkar*

This phrase is a combination of two words: ‘*nahi*’ and ‘*munkar*’. ‘*Nahi*’ means to forbid, interdict, prohibit or hinder. It is implied that forbidding is by creating or inculcating in the mind a sense of realization of decay, degradation or corruption of an act. ‘*Munkar*’ is derived from the root ‘*nakara*’ meaning to feel a repugnance towards, horrible. ‘*Munkar*’ means that which is disallowed, unwarrantable, unlawful or corrupt. ‘*Munkar*’ is the opposite of ‘*maaruf*’.

Awareness of wrong and injustice is an important ingredient of 'Iman'. The Prophet of Islam said, "If any impropriety or injustice is committed in your presence, remedy it with your hand. If it is not possible (due to strong opposition etc.), then stop it with your tongue. If even that is not possible, then realize in your mind that it is wrong. For, that is the last grade of 'Iman'." It, therefore, implies that not realizing wrong actions amounts to an absence of 'Iman'.

'*Nahi annil Munkar*', i.e. to prohibit Muslims and non-Muslims from acts which are universally accepted as degrading, is the foremost duty of every Muslim. It is, in fact, the 'Iman' in action. Just as '*amar bil maaruf*' is enjoined on every Muslim, so is '*nahi annal munkar*'. Giving command of justice and forbidding injustice is the Divine privilege (Qur'an 16:90). Similarly, it is mentioned in the Qur'an as a distinguished role of the Prophet that he enjoins his people to adopt the commonly accepted norms and forbids acts which are definitely degrading. Allah, in all His benevolence, has delegated this divine and Prophetic privilege to the believers.

This responsibility on the shoulders of the believers is therefore, undoubtedly sacred.

40. Ahbit

The words '*ahbit*', '*ahbitu*' and '*yehbit*' used in the Qur'an are derived from the root '*habata*', meaning to alight to land, to settle down or a cause to come down. "*Habt* no doubt means going down to declivity, or descending from a high place to a low one, but its more frequent use in literature is simply in the sense of removing from one place to another."¹ Literally, '*habata*' has almost the same meaning as *nazala*. It therefore appears as if '*habata*' and '*nazala*' are near synonyms. On close scrutiny, however, it becomes evident that these two words have altogether different connotations. The word *nazala*, as discussed separately, is used in the Qur'an in the sense of conveying or bestowing Allah's favor on man. The word '*habata*' is used in the Qur'an in the sense of going down, settling down, etc. It is used in connection with Adam and his progeny in general (Qur'an 2:36,38 and 20:123).

"... and We said: 'You go down (and be henceforth) enemies unto one another; and on earth you shall have your abode and livelihood for a while.'" (Qur'an 2:36)

On one occasion it is used specifically for the Israelites in the sense of settling down in a place and resorting to agriculture:

"...go (back) to the city and then you can have what you are asking for...." (Qur'an 2:61)

The word is once used with reference to Prophet Nuh's coming down from the ark after the flood had subsided:

“It was said: Oh, Nuh! Come down (from the ark and onto the land) with peace from Us and blessings upon thee...” (Qur’an 11:48)

The word is used with reference to Iblis also:

“He (Allah) said (to Iblis): then set forth from this (state) for it does not befit you to show arrogance here. Go forth, you are of the abject one.” (Qur’an 7:13)

The Qur’an used the simile of rocks for the hearts of persons who have no compassion, and uses the word ‘*yehbitu*’, saying:

“...and verily, (there are) some of them that fall down (*yehbitu*) for fear of Allah.” (Qur’an 2:74)

What it meant here is the bowing down of the hearts from fear of Allah.

There is a general notion that the sense of disgrace and falling from dignity is attached to the word ‘*habata*’. In fact, there appears to be no justifiable grounds for forming such an opinion. No doubt in the two *ayaat*, 2:61 and 7:13, the sense of disgrace is implied; it is so because of the situation depicted therein. The word ‘*habata*’ by itself does not carry any sense of disgrace.

In respect of other *ayaat*, guidance, peace or blessings of Allah are mentioned: (Qur’an 2:38, 11:48 and 20:123).

“We said to you to go down from this state, there shall certainly be guidance unto you from me...” (Qur’an 2:38)

It may be noted that the address to Adam and his wife includes the progeny of Adam. In *ayah* 2:36 to 2:38, the address is changed from the dual form to the plural. This indicates that the moral of the narration relates to the progeny of Adam, ie. the human race as a whole. It was after the forgiveness of Adam’s fault that the progeny of Adam was asked to settle down on Earth (Qur’an 2:38). Adam was removed from Paradise to Earth not by way of a penalty, as his sin was forgiven. Moreover it is against the justice of Allah to punish the progeny for the sin committed by Adam which itself was forgiven.

As seen above the word ‘*ahbit*’ is used in *ayah* 1:48 with reference to Prophet Nuh and he is being asked to disembark from the ark with peace from Allah.

In the following *ayah*, also ‘*ahbita*’ is used with reference to Adam and his progeny and it is said that guidance shall come to them.

“(Allah turned His mercy towards Adam and) said: ‘*ahbita*’ both of you together from it (Paradise) with enmity one to another. But if, as is sure, there

comes unto you guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance will not lose way nor fall into misery." (Qur'an 20:123)

In the above *ayah* also, '*ahbita*' is not used in the sense of falling from dignity. It can therefore, be surmised that the sense of disgrace is not attached to the word '*habata*' itself.

41. Hajra (Qur'an 59: 9)

Hajra is derived from the root '*hajara*' meaning to separate one's self from, break off an acquaintance with, abstain from, quit.

By implication "*hajra*" means the act of departing or leaving. It is thus applied to emigration. It does not mean flight as loosely translated. In fact '*hajra*' is an act of dissolution of an association based on dissent, in the place of which new connection is formed. *Muhajir* (plural *muhajirin* or *muhajirun* and feminine *muhajira*) means emigrant.

The earliest '*muhajira*' i.e., migrant in history was Hajira, who migrated to the distant and forlorn city, Makkah with her husband Prophet Ibrahim and son Ismail. It is most probable that she got her name *Hajira* because of the migration.

Descendant of Prophet Ibrahim from Hajira were designated in Greek as *Magaritai* (in a papyrus of 648) and in Syriac as *Mahgre* or *Mahgraye* from as early as the 640s.

The Greek and Syriac sources use the terms referring to the community as a whole. The *Mahgraye* may thus be seen as *Hagerene*, participants in the *Hijra*. The corresponding Arabic term is *Muhajirun*.

The followers of Prophet Muhammad (S) migrated to Abyssinia in the first instance. This word is however applied in Islamic for the cause of Islam. The word '*muhajir*' is not applied to the Prophet himself, but to those who migrated with him, before him or after him, and later made up a considerable portion of the population of Medina. The followers of the Prophet in Madinah who had embraced Islam before the Prophet's and his Makkan follower's coming to them received the refugees with utmost generosity. They were given the name '*ansar*' (helpers) to distinguish them from the '*muhajirun*' (migrants) because the migrants were mainly dependent on their help and active support after they had given up their homes and livelihood in Makkah. The Prophet described them as the particular favorites of Allah, who will receive a splendid reward for their sacrifice:

"Verily those who have adopted the faith, and who have forsaken (*haajaruu*) the domain of evil and are striving hard in Allah's cause these it is

who may look forward to Allah's grace". (Qur'an 2: 218)

Allah's grace was, however, at first only an indication of a future which had not yet materialized. The immigrants were held in high esteem because of their sacrifice,, and because of their connection in the teachings of Islam.

The Islamic calendar, started from the year of Hijra (migration) from Makkah to Medinah in the year 622 AD.

C. CAPTIVATING NAMES

Preamble

The purpose of the Qur'an is much more wider than to perpetuate a particular event or to make specific references to contemporary supporters of Islam or to its adversaries. It is because of this wider and most objective approach that the Qur'an has but rarely used the names of individuals, except the names of the apostles of Allah. At certain places in the Qur'an, even some of the prophets have not been mentioned by name: the Prophet Yunus is referred to as *Dhu'n-Nun* (Qur'an 21:87) and '*Sahibal- Haut* (Qur'an 66: 48). Similarly Prophet *Dhu'l- Kifl* is mentioned in *ayaat* 21: 85 and in 38: 48 without giving clear identity. *Dhu'l- Qarnain* is mentioned in *ayah* 18: 85 and in two other *ayaat*, without disclosing the real identity. Other than the Prophets the following persons have been mentioned by name in the Qur'an: Zaid, the freed slave and adopted son of the Prophet in *ayah* 33:37, Maryam (Mother of Jesus) in *ayah* 2: 233 and in 20 other *ayaat*, Azar (father of prophet Ibrahim) in *ayah* 6: 74, Imran (father of Maryam) in *ayah* 66: 12, Haman (the prime minister of Fir'aun of Egypt at the time of Prophet Musa) in *ayaat* 28: 6, 28: 38 and 29: 39 etc.

There is a reference to Asya, wife of the Fir'aun, at the time of the Prophet Musa, in the Qur'an: " And Allah presents the example of Fir'aun's wife for those who believe", (Qur'an 66:11) but her name is not mentioned. Similarly there is a reference to Safurah, wife of Prophet Musa in *ayah* 28: 23 to 29 but she is not mentioned by name. No-where in the Qur'an, any opponent of Islam is denounced by name except Haman. The three Ansars of Medina (Ka'bb. Malik, Marara b. Rabi and Hilal b. Umayya) who failed to accompany the Prophet to Tabuk have not been mentioned by name although the reference is not a passing one but in detail. Even the number three is mentioned in the text of the Qur'an (9: 118). According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali "though illustrated by the particular examples, of the Ansar viz. Ka'b, Marara and Hilal the lesson is perfectly general and is good for all times."¹

There is also, a reference to the Battle of Uhad. It was the duty of all who were able to fight, to partake in the sacred cause at Uhad. But a small section, due to timidity failed in their duty. They were not quite as bad as those who failed against Allah, or those who thoughtlessly disobeyed orders. The reference is:

“Those of you
Who turned back
On the day the two hosts
Met, -- it was *Satan*
Who caused them to fail,
Because of some (evil)
They had done. But God
Has blotted out (their fault):
For God is Oft-forgiving,
Most Forbearing. (3: 155)”.¹

Here also the mistake is pointed out and then these persons are pardoned because it is our inner motive that Allah notes. The incident is mentioned. The short comings of some individuals is mentioned. The fact that they were pardoned is mentioned. But their names are not mentioned.

Similarly when the Prophet migrated to Medina, his arrival was welcome to all. It not only did unite them in common life but healed old differences. However, there were some base elements filled with envy. The chief among them was Abdullah bin Ubai. Such hopes as he had entertained of attaining power and leadership by playing on the animosities or defection were dashed to the ground. He now began to work clandestinely. He tried to undermine the Islamic movement by intriguing secretly with its enemies while wearing his loyalty to the Prophet. One companion of the Prophet, Zaid bin. Arqam, revealed to the Prophet one instance when Abdullah b. Ubai had asked the Ansars not to help the migrants, any more. When the Prophet called him and asked about the incident Abdullah bin Ubai denied it on oath. There is a mention of this incident in the Qur'an (63: 8).² Here also the name is not mentioned.

What is true of the adversaries is also true of the supporters of Islam of whom a mention was called for to acknowledge their services and to encourage other believers.

There is a reference of the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Medina;

“ If you help not (your Leader)

(it is no matter) for God

Did indeed help him

When the Unbelievers

Drove him out: he had

No more than one companion:

They two were in the Cave". (Qur'an 9:40)¹

The reference was so manifest that '*Sani Asnain*' became Abu Bakr (R)'s proud title.

Again there is a reference to the Treaty of Hudaibia. Hudaibia is a place in the vicinity of Makka where the Makkans opposed the Prophet and his followers, about 1500 in number, going with the intention to perform *Umra*. With the exception of swords, no other weapons of war were carried, for there was no intention to engage into any conflict, on the sacred journey, within the sacred territory, in the sacred months. It was a time when all hostilities were suspended to enable the pilgrims to visit *Kaaba* in peace and security. Still the Makkans did not allow the Prophet and his companions to enter the holy precincts to perform *Umra*. The action of the Makkans, was therefore, against all tradition. The Prophet deputed his illustrious companion, Uthman (R) to negotiate with the Quraish to allow the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. Uthman (R) was long in returning and it was rumoured that he was slain by the Quraish who were bent to deny the Muslims the performance of *Umra* even by resorting to war. The Prophet called upon his companions to pledge themselves afresh that they would fight to the very last man, if the Quraish kill their envoy as a signal to start war. The pledge was taken under a tree and it is called as *Bait-al Rizwan*. With each individual follower the Prophet took the pledge. There is a reference to this incident in the Qur'an. (48: 10) The name Uthman (R) is not mentioned.

These few examples will suffice to show the uniform approach of the Qur'an in dealing with the contemporary incidents and personalities in most objective manner and using them to draw lasting conclusions. The Qur'an is timeless because of its objective and generalized re-action to contemporary events.

The author is well aware that an exegete is obliged to explain the text of the Qur'an as it stands. He has no right to supply the proper names of the persons, places or things if left unidentified by the Qur'an. This applies to the wives of Adam and Prophets Nuh and Lut for example. In several other places, however, it is clear that the Qur'an has provided clear clues and left it for the intelligent readers to ponder and identify the persons and things

themselves. Some Prophets are mentioned by their by-names and some details are also given about them (for example, Dhul Kifl and Dhul Qarnain). The Qur'an has not left them unidentified. It is therefore felt necessary to identify them. Similarly some plants for example are mentioned by name in the Qur'an, yet their real identity has been lost in divergent or insufficient interpretations (such as 'sidrah', 'kafur', 'talh', etc.). This was the reason why the exegetes in the past have tried to identify them according to their own understanding.

In the following pages attempt has been made to identify some personalities, things (plants etc.) mentioned in the Qur'an.

1. Abu Lahab

It is generally considered that *Surah Al-Lahab* (111) was revealed in response to the attitude of Abdul Uzza son of Abdul Muttalib who was the paternal uncle of the Prophet. This belief is based on the fact that Abdul Uzza was one of the most inveterate enemies of Islam. He opposed the Prophet and his mission from the very beginning. Like Abdul Uzza his wife Umm-e-Jameel, the daughter of Harab, was also a bitter enemy of the Holy Prophet. She used to spread false rumors and evil reports about the Holy Prophet.

While elaborating the occasion of revelation for this sura the exegetes are almost unanimous in furnishing the following details:

In response to the injunction of the Qur'an:

"And warn (whomever you can reach, beginning with) your kinsfolk."
(Qur'an 26: 214)

The Prophet invited all his near relatives at his house and called them towards Allah in the words contained in *ayaat* 2 & 3 or *Surah Hud*. (11)

Abdul Uzza cut him short. All of them made a fun of the Prophet and left him.

The Prophet again gathered all the elite of the Quraish at Safa, a hillock in the vicinity of *Kaaba* and addressed them thus: "would you believe me if I inform you that a great army in the valley behind lies in wait to make a raid upon you?" "Aye" was the reply in one voice, "for we have found you nothing but truthful". Then, said the apostle of Allah "Know that I am a warner (*nazeer*) to you of an approaching doom, if you persist in the worship of your idols (deities) and continue to indulge yourselves in evil practices.' At his stage the ill tempered Abdul Uzza interrupted and in a fit of rage cried out "may you perish!" was it for this that you called us?"

The exegetes conclude that it was on this occasion that the revelation

came and render the *Surah* as follows:

“Perish the hands of Abu Lahab (father of flame) and may he perish: His wealth and what he earned shall not avail him. He shall soon be burnt in a fire of blazing flame. His wife will carry faggots and will be strangled by a cord of palm-fibers round her neck”. (Qur’an *Surah*-111)

The supporters of this view are of the opinion that this sura was revealed during the early Makkan period. Some regard it as the sixth according to chronological order.

In fact this *Surah*, in the first instance, is not in response to the attitude of Abdul Uzza, nor it is a curse or a derision. It is against the spirit and uniform mode and manner of the Qur’an to vilify or denounce an opponent. In fact this *Surah* contains a clear good tiding (*bashara*) and prediction of the conquest of Makkah.

Similarly in accordance with classical Arabic usage ‘*tabbat yadaa*’ is an idiom meaning ‘he is rendered incapable of confrontation’ for, breaking of one’s hand amounts to making a person helpless. Here ‘Abu Lahab’ stands for a system. The renowned Qur’anic scholar Moulana Abdul Hameed Farahi (1863 -1930) is of the view that Abu Lahab was made a symbol because being the mutawalli of *Kaaba* he misused his position and opposed the basic tenets of Islam such as spending in the cause of Allah. ‘Abu Lahab’ though not as important a figure in opposing Islam as Abu Sufiyan or Abu Jahal was regarded as a symbol in preference to them. The prediction of his defeat represents the destruction of the entire system. According to Moulana Farahi this *Surah* was revealed in Makka just before the *Hijrah* or in Medina soon after the *Hijrah*.

The reference is very clear. Abu Lahab (father of flame) is an apt nickname to represent the haughty temperament of Abdul Uzza. The moment *Surah Lahab* (111) was announced, everyone in Makkah knew that the reference was to Abdul Uzza, because of his temperament. The reference, however, is equally applicable to every enemy of Islam, if he exhibits similar fiery hot temper. ‘*Abu Lahab*’ is thus used as a symbol for the elements who oppose the Divine Message.

In this case also according to the uniform approach of the Qur’an the name of Abdul Uzza is not mentioned. He has been merely alluded to. It may also be noted that Abdul Uzza was not known by the nick-name ‘*Abu Lahab*’ before the revelation of *Surah* 111. He virtually lost his real name for posterity and is always remembered by the nick-name which he earned, after the revelation.

It is also generally believed that *Abu Lahab* was the by-name of Abdul Uzza even before the revelation of *Surah* 111. This is improbable. Abdul Uzza

was an important figure of the Quraish clan. It is unlikely that he was given a degrading nick-name before the advent of Islam. If it is argued that Abu Lahab was not a degrading nick-name and that Abdul Uzza was nick named 'Abu Lahab' on account of his beauty, which was most notably expressed in his glowing countenance, it amounts to denying the beauty of the satirical reference in the *Surah*.

2. Adam

Adam is generally regarded as the first human being and the first prophet of Allah. Adam is used 25 times in the Qur'an. A careful study of the relevant *ayaat* will however disclose that Adam as a word applies to mankind as in *ayaat* 5:27, 7:26, 7:27, 7:31, 7:35, 7:182; 17:70 and 36:60.

Adam is the common noun in Hebrew also for human (-kind)

In all the above *ayaat* 'Bani Adam', children of Adam is used. Moreover, before the creation of Adam, Allah addressed the angels as follows: 'Verily I am about to place successor (ruler) on the earth'. This reference and all other references to the creation of man through Adam are symbolic. Reference to Adam is made as a person and not as a particular person or a prophet.

No-where in the Qur'an Adam is mentioned as a prophet. Some exegetes who regard Adam as the first and the foremost prophet argue on the authority of the following *ayah*: "Verily Allah chose (for high distinction) Adam, Nuh and the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran among mankind. " (Qur'an 3:33)

They argue that the word 'astafa' (chosen for high distinction) indicates that Adam was a Prophet. In fact 'astafa' meaning to select or to give preference does not by itself indicate that Adam was selected as Prophet. All the members of *Aale-Ibrahim* (family of Ibrahim) and *Aale-Imran* (family of Imran) were not selected as Prophets. What is mentioned in the above *ayah* is that Adam representing all human beings including Bani Israel (children of Israel) among others was selected for high distinction. This distinction is just a mark of respect. It cannot be inferred that the mantle of prophethood was bestowed on Adam. In the (Qur'an 3:42), 'astafa' has been used for Maryam also who was not a Prophet.

This usage of Adam, Nuh, etc. highlights the unity of human-kind, leaving no special apartments for Israel or Ibrahim.

According to the Qur'an, Nuh was the first and the foremost prophet. (Qur'an 4:163 and 9:70). Qur'an has mentioned human beings as progeny of Adam. (Qur'an 19:58) addresses human beings as children of Adam and says, "Prophets were sent from among you i.e., human beings":

"O Children of Adam! When apostles arise from among you, announcing

to you My directions, then whosoever take heed and correct themselves, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.” (Qur’an 7:35)

The Qur’an used the words (*naas*), ‘*bashar*’ and ‘Adam’ for mankind. In the Qur’an, ‘Adam’ is mentioned as a type representing all mankind. Adam and mankind are almost synonymous.

The Qur’an says that ‘Adam’ was created from dust Qur’an (3:59). ‘*Bashar*’ is also spoken of as having been created from dust (Qur’an 30:20 and 38:71). Similarly it is mentioned about mankind that it was created from dust. (Qur’an 22:5)

3. Imrat Nuh (Qur’an 66:10), Imrat Lut (Qur’an 7:83, 11:81, 66:10).

The Qur’an has rarely mentioned the names of any persons other than the Prophets of Allah. In conformity to this general rule, wife of Prophet Nuh and wife of Prophet Lut have been referred to in Qur’an not by their names, but as ‘wives of two Prophets of Allah.’ Both of them have been mentioned as bad characters. In spite of their association with their respective husbands who were exemplarily righteous persons, they were wicked. Both of them have been mentioned as un-faithful to their husbands. On account of their infidelity and impiety, they perished in this world and will be punished in the Hereafter.

The narrative of Prophet Lut’s wife and her betrayal of her husband is mentioned at several places in the Qur’an including *ayaat* 7:83 and 11:81. As regards Prophet Nuh’s wife, the only explicit reference to her having betrayed her husband is found in *ayah* 66:10, wherein it is mentioned that the wife of Prophet Lut and the wife of Prophet Nuh both betrayed their respective husbands.

The fact that the wife of Prophet Nuh followed the course of impiety is further established, when Allah said about Prophet Nuh’s son, “O Nuh, truly he is not of your family: he is surely (the outcome of) an un-righteous act (*amale ghair saleh*)” (Qur’an 11:46). Some exegetes regarded ‘*amale ghair saleh*’ as equivalent to ‘*zu amale ghair saleh*’ (doer of un-righteous acts). The diction of the Qur’an is, however, very comprehensive. The Qur’an uses the word ‘*amale ghair saleh*’ (un-righteous act) for the son of Nuh, which can equally be interpreted as the outcome of or the doer of an impious act. The son of prophet was perhaps both.

“According to some commentators (ie Tabari and Raazi,) the phrase ‘*Innahu amal ghair saleh*’ relates to Noah’s prayer for his son, and constitutes a divine reproach. Others however, (e.g. Zamakhshari) rejects this interpretation and relates the above phrase to the son, in the manner rendered by me”.¹ According to this interpretation, the translators have

rendered '*Innahu amal ghair saleh*' as 'he was unrighteous in his conduct'.

In the *ayah* 11:45, Prophet Nuh did not ask Allah to bestow anything upon him. At the time when his son had been drowned, and the Ark was marooned on Mount Judi, he asked Allah that He had promised to rescue his entire household except one person, then why did He not rescue his son? Allah replied: "Your son is not a member of your household. He is an evil action". This does not mean that his (the son's) action itself is evil. It does not mean either that Nuh's own question was improper. In the word '*Innahu*' the antecedent of 'he' is the son, and it is not a reference to either to the actions of the son or the Nuh's question. Since Nuh's son signified an evil act, Allah said: "You should not ask a question about which you know nothing".

The Qur'an while mentioning Imrat Nuh and Imrat Lut as two bad characters, has not stressed on the story part of it, but propounded for those who disbelieve, the similitude of those two bad characters (Qur'an 66:10). The life of faithlessness is described to impress the real significance of this attitude. The non-believers are compared to adulterous wives. The similitude is full of wisdom. Those who disbelieve (the infidels), utterly disregard and break the covenant with Allah. It is very similar to the infidelity of the wives of the prophets who broke the covenant with their husbands to remain loyal to them.

Just in the same manner as these two wives living under the marital bond of the two prophets *kanata tahta abdaini* (Qur'an 66:10), defrauded them *fakhanata huma* (Qur'an 66:10). The unbelievers living within the bounds of the heavens and the earth *akhtaris samawat wal arz* (Qur'an 55:33) created by the Al-Mighty, dare to deny His authority.

Some exegetes are of the opinion that the betrayal in both the cases was not the betrayal of the marital bond, but it refers to the fact that both of them did not have faith in the message brought by their respective husbands. If this interpretation is accepted, the beauty of similitude of the Qur'an will be lost. In simile, two exactly similar things cannot be compared. It is a comparison in which one thing is compared to another because of their mutual resemblance in some aspects. How can the disbelief of the wives of the two Prophets can be compared with the disbelievers in general?

In the very next *ayaat* 66:11 & 12 two respectable ladies i.e., wife of Fir'aun and Maryam, daughter of Imran have been compared to the men of faith.

These powerful similies are most effective in convincing the common man about the nature of belief and disbelief.

4. Taa-Buut (Qur'an 2:248)

The Ark, which the Israelites used to keep with them during all expeditions, with the belief that it would be a source of success, is mentioned in great detail in the Bible. This was a coffer or a chest which contained the Ten Commandments engraved on stone tablets and several other relics. The Israelites considered it as a sacred possession.

The Israelites believed that so long as the 'ark' was with them, all their expeditions would be successful. This belief was in fact, based on false notions. The relics of the earlier prophets by themselves cannot protect a nation, if it has no faith (*Iman*) or good deeds to its credit. During the early part of Prophet Samuel's ministry, the 'ark' was lost to the enemy, the pagan Philistines.

How it was taken by them, and the circumstances in which it was returned, is described in greater detail in the Bible. This can be summarized as follows:

During a war the Philistines had captured the 'ark'. Where ever the Philistines carried it, pestilence spread. They, therefore, decided to return it. They placed it on a cart driven by milch cows, and sent it off. (Samuel Chapters 5 & 6). The people approached and pressed Samuel to appoint a king to wage war on Jalut. Accordingly, Prophet Samuel appointed Taaluut who was a poor person of humble origin. The people were not happy with this appointment. Samuel said that the sign of the establishment of Taaluut's sovereignty would be, that the 'ark' would be brought back during his rule. This came true, and the 'ark' was brought back.

There is only one reference to this coffer in the Qur'an. For a better understanding of the word '*taabuut*', it is necessary to refer to the prior two *ayaat* 2:246 & 247, "Have you thought of the elders or the people of Israel after Moses, and how they had said to their apostle 'Set up a king for us, then we shall fight in the way of Allah'. He replied:

'This too is possible that when commanded to fight, you may not fight at all.' They said: 'how is it we should not fight in the way of Allah when we have been driven from our homes and deprived of our sons? But when they were ordered to fight, they turned away, except for a few; yet Allah knows the sinners". (Qur'an 2:246)

"And when their Prophet said to them:

'Allah has raised Taaluut as king over you'. They said: 'How can he be king over us when we have greater right to kingship than he, for he does not even possess abundant wealth?' 'Allah has chosen him in preference to you,'

said the Prophet. 'And given him much more wisdom and prowess; and Allah gives authority to whomsoever He wills. Allah is infinite and all-wise'". (Qur'an 2:247)

Then comes the next *ayah* where in the word '*taabuut sakiina*' occurs: and their Prophet said to them. "'The sign of his (*Talut's*) authority is that (in his reign) you will come to have a heart full of peace and tranquillity from your Lord, and the legacy left by Moosa and Haron's family (duly) supported by angels. This shall be a token (sign) for you if really you believe'". (Qur'an 2: 248)

The word '*tabut*' has been conventionally interpreted as denoting the 'ark' of the covenant mentioned in the Old Testament. This interpretation is based on Talmudic legend woven round the 'ark'.

"The word, '*tabut*' has generally been translated as 'ark', being taken, perhaps under Rabbinical influences, for the Ark of the Covenant mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible. Raghīb, however, says, it also means 'heart' and 'breast'. *Lisan al-Arab* supports this view, and Zamakshari and Baidawi also offer this meaning. "The context and the next two *ayaat* 2: 249 and 250) bear out the validity of adopting this translation".¹

It is the beauty of the Qur'an that only a passing reference to the 'ark' is given; no dimensions and other details; and no particulars of what it contained are given as they are found in the Bible. In fact the '*Tabut*' of the Qur'an is not at all concrete or tangible object. The 'ark; as described in the Bible represents nothing but the superstitious belief of the Israelites. The word '*tabut*' as used in the Qur'an means chest, just as in the English language, it conveys the meaning of a 'coffer' as well as the 'breast' which represents the heart that lies therein.

In a beautiful manner, while keeping the background of the Bible story which was current among the People of the Book, the Qur'an corrects the superstitious belief and gives a realistic meaning to the whole concept. According to the Qur'an, it was not the wooden chest covered with gold, containing the relics which could be a sign of *Talut's* authority, but the real sign was that he brought peace and confidence. '*Tabut sakina*' of the Bible was brought back on a cart by milch cows, whereas the '*sakiina*' (tranquillity of heart) according to the Qur'an, was brought back by the angels. The relics of the past can be forcibly taken by the enemy as it is said to have actually happened with the people of Israel twice, and it was lost for ever. 'The *sakina* of the heart' on the other hand, when once acquired by faith in Allah and by right deeds, cannot be taken away by the enemy.

The Qur'an says: "The Lord inspired the angels (with the message) 'I am

with you: give tranquillity (*sakiina*) to the believers. I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers :”(Qur’an 8: 12).

At another place the Qur’an says:

“Whereupon Allah bestowed from on high His (gift of) tranquillity (*sakiina*) upon His Apostle and upon the believers :” (Qur’an 9: 26)

The same meaning of ‘*sakiina*’ is maintained in *ayah* 2:248.

Those who allege that the Qur’anic stories are borrowed from the Bible would be well advised compare the Biblical account with the Qur’an version.

It is strange that this beauty of the Qur’an is lost in a majority of the renderings in English and Urdu.

Some authorities, however, attribute to ‘*tabut*’ the meaning of ‘bosom’ or ‘heart’.

“In view of the subsequent mention of the ‘inner peace’ in the ‘taabuut’ its rendering as heart is definitely more appropriate than ‘ark’”.¹

5. Taurat, Zaboor, Injeel

It has been stated by almost all the exegetes of the Qur’an that *Taurat*, as mentioned in the Qur’an is the name of the Book which was revealed to Prophet Musa and that *Zaboor* is the name of the Book which was revealed to Prophet Dawud.

It is strange that this bold assertion is made without any authority. Nowhere in the Qur’an it is mentioned that *Taurat* was revealed to Prophet Musa or, the name of the Book revealed to Prophet Musa was *Taurat*.

As far as *Injeel* is concerned, the Qur’an in un-equivocal terms states it as a Book revealed to Prophet I’sa (Jesus). (Qur’an 5:46 and 57:27). Thus we can say with certainty that *Injeel* is the name of the Book which was revealed to Prophet I’sa.

The New Testament as now received by the Christian Church comprises of the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, Epistles (twenty one letters written by St. Paul and other disciples), Apocalypse ie. the Book of Revelation, ascribed to St. John and containing mystic visions .

The *Injeel* mentioned in the Qura’n as the Book revealed to Prophet I’sa(Jesus) is therefore, not the New Testament. It is the ‘Evangelion’ (Arabicized form of which is *Injeel*) Evangelion literally means ‘basharah’ or

promise of a happy life. This original Gospel was revealed to Jesus (Prophet I'sa). It was subsequently lost and forgotten. This fact is mentioned in the Qura'n:

"And from those who say, 'Behold, we are Christians, We have accepted a solemn pledge'; and they too, have forgotten much what they have been told to bear in mind --- wherefore We have given rise to enmity and hatred (to last) until the Day of Resurrection". (Qur'an 5: 14)

According to the church historian Wilhelm Nestle, "Christianity is the religion founded by Paul; it replaced Christ's gospel with a gospel about Christ".¹

Fragments of the 'Evagelion' survive in the Gospels of which four are now accepted by the Christian Church and which form part of the New Testament.

In fact, the Taurat, which the Qur'an confirms, is not the Old Testament or the Pentateuch, but it (*Taurat*) is contained therein. Similarly the *Injeel* which the Qur'an confirms, is not the New Testament or the four Gospels but it (*Injeel*) is contained therein.

According to the Qur'an, only scattered portions in the Old and the New Testaments are *Taurat* and *Injeel* respectively and the Qura'n has confirmed them..

The name *Al-Taurat*, meaning 'The Law', has been mentioned 18 times in the Qur'an. (*Ayaat* Nos:- 3:3, 3:43, 3:50, 3:65, 3:93 (twice), 5:43, 5:44, 5:46 (twice), 5:66, 5:68, 5:110, 7:157, 9:111, 43:29, 61:6, 62:5.)

It is evident from these *ayaat* that *Al-Taurat* was revealed after Prophet Ibrahim, that it was revealed for Bani Israel, that prophet I'sa (Jesus) as well as the Qur'an testify the teachings of *Al-Taurat*. Nowhere in the above *ayaat* it is mentioned that *Al-Taurat* was exclusively revealed to Prophet Musa.

The name of Prophet Musa is mentioned not less than 136 times in the Qur'an. Nowhere it is mentioned that *Taurat* was revealed to him.

In *ayah* 126 of *Surah Al-Araf*, *ayah* 75 of *Surah Yunus* and *ayah* 30 of *Surah Al-Mominun*, the revelation made to prophet Musa is mentioned as *ayat* (Message).

In *ayah* 48 of *Surah Al-Anbiah*, the Book revealed to Prophet Musa is mentioned as *Al-Furqan*. It may be noted that *Al-Furqan* is not mentioned as proper name for the Book revealed to Prophet Musa. *Furqan* is the quality of making clear distinction (between right and wrong). Qur'an is also called *Al-Furqan* in the Qur'an (25: 1). Similarly the day of the Battle of Badar is also

termed as *Al-Furqan* (Qur'an 8: 41).

In most of the other places, the Book revealed to Prophet Musa is merely mentioned as the Book, *al-Kitab*, e.g. (Qur'an 2:53, 6:91 and 154, 11:110, 17:2, 23:49, 25:35, 23:43, 32:23, 37:117, 40:53, 41:45, 46:12 etc. Even when there is mention of the Book of Prophet Musa in *Surah Hud* the name *Taurat* is not mentioned (Qur'an 11:17)

In *ayah* 36 of *Surah Al-Najm* and *ayah* 19 of *Surah Al-Aala* the name of the Book revealed to Prophet Musa is mentioned as Book of Moses "*Sahaf Moosa*". Nowhere the Book revealed to Prophet Musa is mentioned as *Al-Taurat*.

It is interesting to note that Qur'an mentions the Books earlier to *Injeel* as *Al-Taurat*. The Books which were known as Bible and which are even now termed as Old Testament are called *Al-Taurat* in the Qur'an. The Book revealed to Prophet Dawud and Prophet Musa are included in *Al-Taurat*. Qur'an nowhere mentions *Al-Taurat* as the Book exclusively revealed to Prophet Musa.

It is further to be noted that the name *Al-Taurat* is coined by the Qur'an for all the Books earlier to *Injeel*. The name *Al-Taurat* was not the proper name of the Book of Musa or the Book of any other Prophet.

Zaboor

Zaboor literally means 'scripture' or 'book'. It is a generic term denoting any 'book of wisdom'. Any and all of the divine scriptures revealed by Allah to the Prophets can be termed as *Zaboor*.

Zaboor was not the name of the Book exclusively revealed to Prophet Dawud. However, among *Bani Israel*, the Book revealed to Prophet Dawud was popularly known as *Zaboor*. When the Qur'an referred to the Book of Dawud, it used the same word *zaboor* as a common noun. Qur'an says:

"And to Dawud We gave *zaboor*" (Qur'an 4:163 and 17:55)

The Qur'an has not used *zaboor* as a specific name for the Book of Dawud, as it has used the word *Injeel* for the specific Book of Prophet *I'sa*. The Qur'an has used *zaboor* (meaning book) as a common noun. In both the above *ayaat* in definite article '*al*' is not applied to the word *zaboor*. If *zaboor* was used as a proper noun the indefinite article would certainly have been used.

Moreover there is no plural form of a proper noun. *Injeel* and Qur'an are proper nouns for the Books revealed to Prophet *I'sa* and Prophet Muhammad (S) respectively. No plural form of either *Injeel* or Qur'an is any

where used in the Qur'an.

The plural of *zaboor* is *Zubur*. This plural form is used in the Qur'an:

"And verily, it is in the old Books (*zubur*)". (Qur'an 26:196)

The plural form, *zubur* is also used in *ayaat* 3:184, 16:44, 23:53, 35:25, 54:43.

Whenever the word *zaboor* is used in the Qur'an, it clearly means book (as a common noun). eg.:

"And already have We written in *zaboor* after the reminder (of law) that My righteous servants shall inherit the earth." (Qur'an 21:105).

If *zaboor* is taken as Book of Dawud, the purpose of the above *ayaat* will be that the divine condition that "the righteous shall inherit the earth" was not mentioned in other earlier books. In fact the same divine promise occurs in the Pentateuch, (Greek term meaning the 'Five Books' which are traditionally ascribed to Prophet Musa). In one of these five Books it is mentioned:

"..... they shall inherit it (the land) for ever" (Exodus, 32:13).

It is therefore not correct to consider *zaboor* expressly as the Book of Dawud.¹

6. Dhu'l Kifl

The name *Dhu'l Kifl* is mentioned in the Qur'an along with the names of Prophet *Ismael* and *Idrees*, (Qur'an 21:85) with Prophet *Ismael*, and Prophet *Al Yasa (Elisha)* (Qur'an 38:48). The classical exegetes considered *Dhu'l Kifl* to be the proper name of a particular Prophet. That *Dhu'l Kifl* is a title and not a name is clear from the word itself. In the Qur'an we find similar by-names or epithets such as *Dhun Nun* (Qur'an 21:87), *Dhu'l-Qarnain* (Qur'an 18:83) etc. It is clear from these two *ayaat* that *Dhu'l Kifl* was a Prophet, but the personality of *Dhu'l Kifl* is wrapped in un-certainty.

As regards the identity of *Dhu'l Kifl*, the commentators have offered many suggestions but as observed in Ruhul Maani, none is correct. The commentators differ in their opinions and have not arrived at any consensus there has always been great uncertainty and their wide guesses show that they were quite ignorant of real identification. They have hesitatingly and at random identified *Dhu'l Kifl* with various prophets' mostly Biblical personages, with no authority whatsoever. The commentators have based their suggestions mostly on conjectures. For example, Ezekiel was an Israelist Prophet who was carried away to Babylon by Nubuchadnezzar after the capture of Jerusalem in 590 B.C. He was chained and put in prison. For a time he was dumb and lost the power of speech. He bore the calamity with

patience and constancy. Since Qur'an has grouped *Dhu'l Kifl* among men of constancy and patience, the commentators identified him as Ezekiel. Similarly others have identified *Dhu'l Kifl* as other Biblical prophets such as Joshua, Elijah, Zachariah or Isaiah only on probabilities. *Tabari* and *Mudhijra'al Din al Uns al Dijalil* regard *Dhu'l Kifl* as Ayyub (job).¹ All of them have searched in vain in the Bible, where there is no mention of *Dhu'l Kifl*. The commentators widely differ in their opinion as to who is meant by *Dhu'l Kifl* and why the title *Dhu'l Kifl* is applied to him. The commentators ought to have taken into consideration the fact that in the Qur'an there is mention of not only Biblical prophets but of other prophets also such as, Salih, Hud etc., Islam is not only a successor to Judaism and Christianity but it is a successor of all earlier world religions. The Prophet of Islam confirms all the earlier prophets of all world religions. The teachings of all earlier Books, so far they have not been affected by corruption are acceptable to Muslims. From this point of view, the Prophet with the title of *Dhu'l Kifl* is to be searched among world prophets and not within the limited circle of Biblical prophets alone. The Qur'an has a prophetology that is independent of the Biblical tradition.

"The accepted collections of *Hadiths* make not the slightest mention of *Dhu'l - Kifl*, a proof that *Hadith* criticism places no value on the manifold legends about this individual".¹

Some commentators who regarded (*kifl*) as an Arabic word, tried to seek the opinion that *Dhu'l Kifl* is not a name and that it is derived from the verbal root *kfl* or *Takafalla*. In other words they tried to seek the personality of *Dhu'l Kifl* in the derivatives of the root '*kfl*'. The etymologies based on the derivative forms however, do not yield any satisfactory solution. They did not succeed in that direction also. It did not occur to them that *kifl* is a transliteration of non-Arabic proper noun (Arabicised form of *Kapila*).

The prefix '*dhu*' meaning 'of' or 'connected with' is frequently used in the Qur'an such as '*Dhu'l-inteqam*' (Qur'an 3:3), '*Dhu'l-autad*' (Qur'an 89:10) etc.

The exegetes have suggested that '*zun-nuun*' (the man of the fish) occurring in the Qur'an (21:87) refers to Prophet Yunus. This suggestion is acceptable because, *nuun* in Arabic means fish. Since there is a specific mention of the Prophet Yunus having an encounter with the fish (Qur'an 37:142), it becomes clear that the title '*zun-nuun*' applies to Prophet Yunus and to none else. A similar title '*saheb-ul-hoot*' is also used for Prophet Yunus (Qur'an 68:48). *Sahib* is a near equivalent to '*dhu*' and it is also a prefix meaning 'of' or 'connected with'. *Hoot* means fish. Here also the reference is clear.

This approach of the exegetes is a source of encouragement to explore the identity of *Dhu'l Kifl*.

Dhu'l Kifl is obviously a descriptive title

As pointed out above, '*kifl*' is an arabicised from (moarrab) of *Kapil*. *Dhu'l Kifl* thus means the man of *Kapila* or 'One who belonged to *Kapila*'.

In India the founder of Buddhism was Gautam Siddhartha. He is also called The Buddha, 'The Enlightened One'. He was born at Kapilavastu. In Arabic there is no corresponding alphabet for the consonant 'P'. Just as the Persian word '*chirag*' became '*siraj*' in Arabic, (25:61 etc) or sang to gil of perisan became '*siggil*' (105:43) in Arabic the equivalent of 'of *Kapila*' will be '*Dhu'l Kifl*'.¹

The position of Muslims as regards accepting The Buddha as an apostle of Allah is interesting. Muslims believe that Allah's messengers (apostles) have come in every nation and in every age. The Qur'an says that some of the apostles have been mentioned in the Qur'an and that many others have not been mentioned. There is no difficulty in accepting those apostles who have been mentioned in the Qur'an. Even if one does not agree that there is mention of Buddha in the Qur'an, under the general belief a Muslim cannot specifically say that Buddha was not the apostle of Allah. A section of Muslim scholars, including prof Manazar Ahsan Gilani and Dr. Muhammad Hameedullah however, claim that Buddha has been mentioned in the Qur'an as an apostle of Allah, under the epithet '*Dhu'l Kifl*'. According to Dr. Hameedullah "the name of the Prophet *Dhu'l - Kifl* literally: one who is of *kifl*) is interpreted as "*Kapila - Vastu*" - the birth place of Gautama Buddha - *Kapila* being arabicized into *Kifl*. Another interpretation is that "*Kifl*" literally is nourishment", is the translation of "*Suddho Dana*", the name "of the father of Buddha".¹ Similarly the word '*sabeyeen*' and '*sabeyun*' (Qur'an 2:62, 22:17 & 5:69) is also mentioned in the Qur'an for the Buddhists.

There is another pointed reference to Buddhism in the Qur'an: While referring to four world religions, Qur'an has used beautiful representative words (*surah* 95). The four sacred symbols viz., the Fig, the Olive, Tur of Senai and the sacred city of Makka, represent four religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam respectively. "It has been suggested that the Fig stand for the Ficus Indica, the Bo-tree under which Gautam Buddha obtained nirvana."²

The eminent scholar Dr. M. Hameedullah (d.2002) one of the protagonists of the identification' also relied on the same *ayah* and said:

"In the *Surat* 95 of the Qur'an, we read: 'By the fig-tree, and by olive - tree, and by the mount Sinin, and by this protected city'.

There is unanimity among commentators that 'this City' is Mecca, 'mount Sinin' is Sinai of Moses, Mount of Olives refers to Jesus. As to fig tree, everybody knows the Bodi tree, the tree of savage fig, under which Gautama

Buddha received his first revelation. Fig tree has had importance in the life of no other known Prophet".¹

The general explanation that Allah swears by the Fig because of the fact it contains no stones and can be eaten at once, that it is easy to digest and that it is good for health etc., cannot be accepted.

7. Al-Raihan

The name '*al-raihan*', has occurred twice in the Qur'an i.e., in *ayaat* 55:12 and 56:89. In the former, it is used in a literal sense, whereas in the latter its use is allegorical, denoting comfort, tranquillity and satisfaction as inner fulfillment, or as a gift and favor of Allah. Some commentators have taken it as a word and rendered it into English as food material. Most of the English translators have rendered it as [fragrance](#), (Daryabadi) fragrant flower, (Zafrulla), fragrant herb, (Abul Fazl, Arberry, Irving and Dr. Latif), scented herb (Pickthall, Zaid Mahmud), sweet smelling plant, (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Asad Muhammad) etc., without specifically identifying it. According to M.I.H Farooqi E. Blatter in *Florica Arabica* has identified '*raihan*' as *ocimum basilicum* (Sweet Basil). It is highly aromatic. The whole plant of '*raihan*' is highly fragrant. In India it is used as a culinary herb. In Europe also it is used for seasoning certain kinds of food. The flowers are carminative, diuretic and stimulant. The seeds are mucilaginous and are highly astringent. They have medicinal value. '*Raihan*' is found wild as well as cultivated throughout Arabia in general, and in Yemen in particular. It is also cultivated throughout India, and its seeds are known as '*subzah*'.

There are several species of '*ocimum*' occurring in India. Another species of the same genus is '*tulsi*' or '*Ram tulsi*' (*ocimum sanctum*), which is considered to be a sacred plant.

Due to several benefits and medicinal uses of some species of *raihan*, they are not only regarded as sacred plants but even worshipped among certain religions. The Qur'an has aptly used the name '*raihan*' allegorically to denote gift and favor of Allah such as tranquillity and satisfaction. The approach of the Qur'an is that the creations of Allah should not be regarded as objects of worship but they only indicate Allah's favors and powers.

8. Sidrah

The name '*sidrah*' occurring in *ayah* 34:16, 53:14, 33:16, and 56:28 is generally identified as the lote tree. In *ayah* 34:16 the name '*sidrah*' is used in its literal meaning. In *ayah* 56:28 its use is allegorical which is suggestive of security and comfort of Heaven. In this *ayah* also literal meaning is relevant.

The word '*Sidratul Mintaha*' mentioned in *ayah* 53:14 and the shrouded

sidra mentioned in *ayah* 53:16 have been discussed separately.

As to the identification of the '*sidrah* tree', in these two *ayaat* 34:16 and 56:28, the commentators are almost unanimous that it is the lote tree. A little reflection however, will show that the identification is not appropriate and perhaps not correct.

In *Surah Saba*, there is mention of the inundation of Maarib dam as a punishment for the back-sliding of the inhabitants of Yemen. Maarib dam of Yemen was built a few centuries after prophet Sulayman and Queen Saba. The country was amply irrigated and was the most fertile part of Arabia. The first breach of the dam, most probably occurred in the second century of the Christian era. The kingdom of Saba was largely devastated. The great dam completely collapsed in the sixth century of the Christian era, a few decades before the advent of Islam. As a result of these great catastrophes, the flourishing 'Garden of Arabia' was converted into a waste. Wild trees producing bitter fruits, replaced luscious fruit trees.

Says the Qur'an,

"And We sent against them the floods (released) from the dam and We converted their two gardens into gardens producing '*khamat*', '*asl*' and '*sidrin qaleel*'" (Qur'an 34:16).

The Qur'an has mentioned the three species of trees which, having long strong trunks, escaped the devastation caused, and survived (survived the floods as well as endured the aridity as the consequences of the floods). These were:

1. Tooth brush trees, (*shajar-al-miswak* i.e., (*Salvadora Persica*),
2. *Tamarisk*,
3. *Sidrah*.

Sidrah cannot be identified as lote tree of the genus *ziziphus*, (or *jujube*) for the simple reason that it has no resilience to withstand and survive the floods. More over, *ziziphus* plants are found in tropical region and not in hilly regions, whereas the occurrence of *sidrah* in the cool climate of the hilly areas of Yemen 4000 feet above sea level is mentioned. Taking into account the characteristic of *ziziphus*, one is led to the obvious conclusion that '*sidrah*' cannot be *ziziphus* or any of its species.

Sidrah can easily be identified as cedar (*Cedrus Libani* Lovd) which is a cone bearing tree of the Middle East. *Cedrus Libani* is a very tall tree reaching a height up to one hundred and fifty feet with a trunk up to eight feet in diameter. *Sidrah*, because of its strength, withstood the floods and, because of

its deep roots, survived it. According to the Qur'an, the flourishing garden of Arabia, after the flood was converted into a waste, the fruit bearing trees were replaced by plants like 'khamt', 'asl' and 'sidreen qaleel' (few stunted cedar trees).

Cedar is a cone bearing and not a fruit bearing tree. In the reference of the name 'sidrah' in the Qur'an, there is no identification of the existence of its fruit. Further more, in none of the *ayaat* of the Qur'an, one finds the mention of 'sidrah' along with other fruit-bearing trees namely date, olive, fig, grape and pomegranate. All these fruits and fruit bearing trees have been mentioned together several times in many *ayaat*, but in none has 'sidrah' been clubbed with them. Thus, it is evidently clear that by mentioning 'sidrah', Allah has actually emphasized the beauty, strength and grandeur of only the tree and not the fruit.¹

"It is interesting to note that cedar is known in Arabic as *Shajar-al-Allah* or *Shajar-al-Rub* and the allied species, *Cedrus Deodara* found in the Himalayas, is known in Sanskrit and Hindi as 'deodara' which means the wood or tree of God."²

"The Qur'anic 'sidrah' is most likely the Cedar of Lebanon and to relate it with the lote tree seems to be a historical misunderstanding which has perpetuated to this date in the prevalent local names of the plants".³

In 56:28 '*sidrin' makhzud*' is generally rendered as thornless lote trees. According to Mujahid and Zuhak, however, the word '*mukzud*' applies to a tree which is so laden with its produce that it is bent down. Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi has also offered this meaning.⁴ The grandeur of Cedar tree laden with its cones (like water pots) is more appropriate as a symbol of bliss and of high heaven than the 'thornless lote tree.'

9. Sabi'een

The word '*sabi'een*' is used along with 'Muslims, Jews, Christians' in (Qur'an 2:62). It is used along with Muslims, Christians and Magians (Qur'an 22:17). The word '*sabiyun*' is used along with Muslims and Christians (Qur'an 5:59).

It is thus, clear that the word refers to the followers of some important religion worth the mention.

The exegetes widely differ as to the followers of which particular religion the name refers to. The views of the exegetes, as regards the identification of '*Sabi'een/Sabiyun*' are at such variance, that it is very difficult to reach any definite conclusion. The suggestions offered by various exegetes are mostly unconvincing.

According to some, '*Sabians*' were the followers of Saba, the son of Seth, the son of Adam. Some hold that they were the followers of Nuh. They worshipped stars while acknowledging Allah as the Supreme authority. Some are of the opinion that '*Sabians*' was a monotheistic religious group intermediate between Judaism and Christianity. The name '*Sabian*' is "probably derived from the Arabic verb '*sebha*', "he immersed himself (in water)" ¹. Some exegetes came to the conclusion that '*Sabians*' were followers of John the Baptist. They have failed to note and mention the fact that baptism was prevalent among the Buddhists also.

According to the famous Scholar Al-Masoodi: "When during the reign of the Persian emperor *Tahmuras*, '*Artaxerxes - I*' (reign 464 to 424 BC), people indulged in idol and star worship, *Buzasif* appeared in India. He was founder of *Sabian* religion".

Similarly Beiruni in his famous book '*Al-Aasaar-al Baqia*' under the chapter '*Clamants of Prophethood*' has stated "*Buzasif* appeared in India, one year after Artaxerxes of Persia, and introduced Persian script. He called people to the faith of Sabieen. Multitude followed him. The remainder of his followers are found even today in India, China and among the Turkish clans".¹

In the Book '*Sharah Hikmatul Ashraq*' also it is mentioned that *Buzasif* is the person who founded the *Sabian* religion.

According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, *Buzasif* is transliteration of *Bodhisattva*.²

According to Shah Waliullah, *Sabian* cover all the people earlier than the followers of Prophet Ibrahim, including the Buddhists who were influenced by the teachings of Ibrahim (and grew as a reaction to Brahmanism).

Abdullah Yusuf Ali says, "'The term *Sabieen* can be extended by analogy to cover earnest followers of Zoroaster, the Vedas, Buddha, Confucius and other teachers of the moral law".¹

The view of some Arab historians is that '*Sabeans*' mentioned in the Qur'an are the followers of Buddha. Prof. Syed Manazar Ahsan Gilani was also of the same view. He says "*Buzasif* is the Arabic transliteration of Buddha. In Arabic books, Buddha is always mentioned as *Buzasif*". The learned Prof. is also of the view: "I regard Buddha as the Eastern herald of Prophet Muhammad (S) (in the same way as I regard) Prophet Jesus Christ as the Western herald." ^{2 & 3}

The eminent Islamic scholar Dr. Md. Hameedullah also subscribes to this view.

Apart from being a name of a world religion, etymologically the words '*Sabi'een*' and '*Sabiyun*' are both plural of *sabi*. The word '*sabi*' applies to a person who leaves his ancestral religion and embraces a new religion. The Quraish of Makka used to taunt the Prophet and his Companions as '*sabi*' for the Prophet and his Companions had abandoned their ancestral religion. Gautam Buddha raised a strong voice against his ancestral religion. The term '*sabi*', as it is applicable to Buddha is not perhaps equally applicable to any prophet in the history of religion except Jesus Christ, and Prophet Muhammed (S).

If the relationship of '*Dhu'l Kifl*' and '*Sabeans*' is kept in mind then the identification of both becomes obvious.

The commentators while trying to identify the '*Sabeans*', searched for them among those who abandoned Judaism or Christianity. When they could not succeed in that direction, some of them, including the renowned commentator Mujahid stated: "*Sabeans*' are neither Jews nor Christians and they have no religion". He also observed: "Sabeans are people between Zoroastrians and Jews".

Evidence is available that the followers of Buddhism were living in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine even earlier than Christianity. From the inscription of Ashoka found at Girnar it is evident that he sent five preachers to the Middle-East for propagation of Buddhism. This was the first period of expansion of Buddhism in the Middle-East.

The second period of expansion starts after expulsion of Buddhists from India. It is generally and erroneously believed that Buddhism experienced a fatal blow as a result of Muslim invasion of India. The fact is that opposition directed by Brahmanism against Buddhism under the leadership of Shankara Charya was so strong that long before the Muslim invasion the genocide was over and the Buddhists were completely banished from India. In fact the entry of Muslims in the sub-Continent became possible only due to the vacuum created by the expulsion of Buddhists toward whom the down trodden lower castes looked for support. The muslims proved to be a good substitute and the disillusioned lower castes supported them.

When violence became the order of the day in India, the Buddhists died in multitudes. Those who survived had to save their lives by leaving the country. They migrated to Nepal, Tibet, China, Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan and Arabia. The presence of Buddhists in the Middle-East at the advent of Islam can be accepted as an established fact.

The presence of Buddhists in the Middle-East is also evident from the fact that the Baramaka Vazirs of the Abbasides were the descendants of Permukhs of Nav Bahars (Vihars) of Balakh.

It is thus clear that the word *Sabi'een* used in the Qur'an refers to the Buddhists ie. the followers of the Prophet *Dhu'l Kifl*.

10. Talut and Jalut

The Bible (Old Testament) is full of details and it is mainly interested in the narratives of individuals such as Saul and Goliath. The Qur'an, however, has not given detailed account of the personalities. It is because the Qur'an stresses the universal truths. According to the Qur'an:

1. A person who is superior and rich in knowledge and splendid in physique is fit to be a king. Allah knows who is fit to lead and govern.
2. The sign of kingship is that he should be able to inspire confidence and instill tranquillity in the hearts of people.
3. Numbers do not count. Many a times a small body of men has overcome a greater body by the permission of Allah.
4. Physical strength is of no avail against truth, courage and good planning. The weapons of opponents may be an instrument for their destruction. (Qur'an 2:247-249)
5. *Iman* brings Allah's rewards which have many forms.
6. Prophethood and kingship can co-exist. Kingship is not incompatible with prophethood and highest spiritual achievements.

The story is taken from the Bible and 'compressed' into a few words and its spiritual lessons are dwelt upon from many points of views.

Talut was the king of Israelites. He reigned from 1018 to 1003 B.C. Allah had given him an excellent degree of knowledge and personal appearance. He was tall and the Qur'anic name *Talut* is expressive of tallness. The name *Talut* is derived from the root 'tool'. He fought against the Philistinian army. Prophet Dawud was an ordinary soldier in King *Talut's* army, who courageously attacked *Jalut* and killed him.

Jalut (mentioned in Bible as Goliath) was a tall and a stout person in the Philistine army. He was considered as a giant. He used to challenge the Israelites every morning and evening, but no one from the army of Saul dared to face him. But Saul, however, took a handful of men who were strong in faith and accepted the challenge. In the combat Prophet Dawud knocked down *Jalut* (Goliath) hitting his forehead, and then slayed him with his own sword.

11. Talh

The name (of the tree) '*talh*' is used only once in the Qur'an (56:29). '*Talh*' is mentioned along with the tree '*sidr*' (cedar). Its use is a part of the allegorical description: righteous people or the blessed ones are referred to as '*as-habul- malmannah*'. The Book of deeds will be delivered in their right hands, hence they are referred to as 'Companions of the Right Hand'. In these *ayaat*, glad tidings are given to virtuous people, who are steadfast in faith, offer prayers, perform good deeds, are kind to fellow human beings, give charity etc. Such persons are described with an apt nomenclature: '*as-habul-malmannah*'. These persons will enjoy supreme peace, utmost satisfaction and bliss. Since the real nature of reward is beyond human perception, the Qur'an has used words which can generally be understood by human beings. It is in this context that the two trees are mentioned, both being beautiful and shadowy (shady) (with and without thorns) as a symbol of bliss and tranquillity.

Most of the English translators of the Qur'an have identified '*talh*' as palm (Dr. Latif), plantain or banana tree (Abul Fazl, Daryabadi, Irving, Zafrulla and Pickthall). Presumably they have come to this conclusion taking the clue from the word '*manzud*', meaning piled one above another. The banana fruit is found in bunches, one tier above another. It is, however, to be noted that in the Qur'an, there is no mention whatsoever of the fruit. '*Manzud*' can refer either to the thorns or the flowers. In this context, both '*sidrah*' and '*talh*' are allegorically used not as fruit bearing tree, nor it was found necessary to mention the fruit. The purport is to mention the trees themselves to indicate peace and tranquility of the 'Companions of the Right Hand'. The Arabs, who were the first addressees of the Qur'an, were quite familiar with both the trees. The Qur'an has successfully conveyed through mention of these trees the state of Heavenly bliss. The same state is conveyed to every reader of the Qur'an even today.

The '*sidr*' in the earlier *ayah* 56:28 has been identified as the 'cedar' tree and not 'lote' tree as generally understood. Similarly, '*talh*' can be identified as accacia arabica and not the banana tree. '*Makhzud*' (Qur'an 56:29) refers to the thorns piled (row after row) as against '*makhzud*' (thornless) in (Qur'an 56:28).

Abdullah Yusuf Ali Says. "Some understanding by his (*talh*) the plantain or banana tree, of which the fruit is brone in bunches, one tier above another; but the banana tree does not grow in Arabia and its ordinary Arabic name is '*mauz*', perhaps it is better to understand a special kind od Acacia tree, which flowers profusely, the flowers appearing in tiers one above another"¹

Ahmed Ali has identified *talh* as acacia (42 p. 466) and J. Arthur Arberry has identified it as 'serried acacias' (43 P. 254).

12. Kafur

There is a single mention of the word 'kafur' in the Qur'an:

"Verily the pious shall drink of a cup the odor (not the taste), whereof is like that of 'kafur'." (Qur'an 76:5)

'Kafur' here represents all that is wholesome, agreeable and refreshing.

In some of the English translations of the Qur'an, 'kafur' has been identified as a river (spring or fountain) in Paradise (Arberry N.J. Dawood, Irving 46, Zafrulla, Plamer, and Zayid Mahmud). Some have identified 'kafur' as camphor (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Amir Ali, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Dr. Latif and Shakir). The spring mentioned in the next *ayah* obviously refers to the drink. It cannot be 'Camphor Spring' or 'Camphor Fountain.' More over Camphor has a pungent smell and taste. It is quite evident that a drink mixed with camphor cannot be an agreeable one. The exegetes have therefore tried to explain that the camphor of Heaven would be without the harmful effects of the camphor of earth. Such explanations are, perhaps, contrary to the approach of the Qur'an. The Qur'an has used words to explain the nature of the bounties of the Heaven. It may not be correct perhaps, to say that a particular fruit or drink mentioned by name in the Qur'an, will be different in Heaven from the one known on the earth.

More over, it is to be noted that both types of camphor (extracted from the Malaysian plant, *Dryobalanops aromatica* and the Chinese plant, *Cinnamomum Camphora*) were not known to the Arabs. The Arab soldiers became familiar with camphor for the first time during the expedition of Iran in 637 A.D. It was mentioned to them as *Kapur* (Sanskrit). Dr. Mohammed Iqtedar Hussain Farooqi is of the opinion that "The history of camphor clearly demonstrates that the Arabs, in all probability, did not know much about camphor before Islam, neither through the Indian trade, nor through the Greek medicine."¹

The affinity of the word 'kafur' in the Qur'an and *Kapur* (Sanskrit) with which the Arabs became familiar for the first time in 637 A.D., more probably gave rise, in later centuries, to the identification of 'kafur' as camphor. In fact, 'kafur' mentioned in the Qur'an, appears to be something else, but not camphor.

There is mention of a substance 'kopher' (copher) in the Bible.

"My beloved is unto me as a cluster of copher in the vineyards of Engedi." (The Song of Solomon, Chapter 1, verse 14).

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; Copher with spikenard." (The Song of Solomon, Chapter 4, verse 13).

In the early translation of the Bible 'copher' was interpreted as camphor. In the recent translations however, copher has been rendered as *hinna* (*Lawsonia Intermiss*).

Dr. M. I. H. Farooqi is of the opinion that the origin of the Qur'anic '*kafur*' is copher (Hebrew) or *Kufros* (Greek) signifying Hinna and not *Kapur* (Sanskrit), meaning camphor.¹

In old Greek literature hinna was called *Kufros*.²

Hinna (*Lawsonia Intermiss*) was well known to Arabs since time immemorial. The flowers of '*hinna*' have a cooling effect and are a stimulant.

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